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MY SON'S WIFE

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My Son's Wife

BY

ROSE PORTER

AUTHOR OF "SUMMER DRIFT-WOOD,"
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MY SON'S WIFE

CHAPTER I

IT seems but yesterday the girl, for whose sake I write the following pages, was a wee bairn. But, despite the seeming, that time dates back to long ago; and now the child is a young woman, and she asks me, her old grandmother, for a wedding gift!

The gift she asks is the story of her mother's early years. At first I inclined to refuse the request, but on second thought I decided to grant it. For "seeing the threads of Providence have many a time a semblance of ravelling," it occurs to me that it may help my granddaughter, and other young creatures like her, if I trace out one here and one there of the threads that were inwrought into the pattern of her mother's life, that thus they may see "how well woven the web was into which the Almighty Hand had run them."

I will find this task less difficult because

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during her girlhood, and the early years of her married life, my son's wife, Bona, kept a diary, and through it I have discovered many things. Nevertheless, as I begin the narrative I realize of all the women I have ever known, and they have been many, for the years of my life will soon number the allotted threescore and ten, my son's wife would be the one most apt to declare that there was nothing in her seemingly uneventful history worth recording, for "the happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history." I do not, however, share this opinion, for it is not the circumstances of our lives that are of value, but the character that is formed by them. And to my way of thinking there was never a sweeter, more helpful life than Bona's, nor one richer in useful hints for those who have come, as her daughter has, to the place

> "Where the brook and river meet,
> Womanhood and childhood fleet."

This is the place, too, from whence, according to the language of metaphor, in all true, earnest lives, the onward path begins to lead "up hill all the way." Yes, we must

climb, if we would reach at last the blessed summit of the Mount of Transfiguration. And what matters it if the path is now and then narrow and rough if it leads *there!* What matters the steep ascent if, like my son's wife, we sing as we climb:

> "Yet a little while,
> Yet a little way,
> Saints shall reap, and rest, and smile,
> All the day
> Up! let's trudge another mile."

But I must not linger to moralize. That is something Bona never does. She is one of those who *lives* rather than *talks* her religion, and the great power of her influence is its genuineness. She is all through what she seems. When I saw Bona for the first time she was a child, and then came a stretch of years during which we did not meet, and then my son Edward brought her to Greenville as his bride, and again I was straightway impressed by her simplicity and integrity of character. From the hour of arrival I began to love her, and to regard her not merely as my son's wife, but as my dear daughter Bona.

Recalling the early glimpse I had of her

in childhood I remember a fair-haired, laughing little maiden, with cheeks red as roses, and eyes—well, I never saw the like of them, such sweet, honest brown eyes. When they were cast down her face had a grave, thoughtful look, but when she lifted them it was like the shining of stars in the sky. Indeed, then and all through her life Bona's eyes have been her chief claim to beauty. In color, as I said, they are brown, and shaded by the longest lashes I have ever seen. But it is in their expression the wonderful charm exists. It is that one observes, rather than beauty of color or shape. And this is as it should be, for as Victor Hugo writes: "There is one thing which bears more resemblance to our true selves than our face, and that is our expression; and there is yet another thing which resembles us more than this, and that is our smile." And Bona's smile is simply Bona, and her soul speaks through it.

It is not only her personal appearance I remember when I saw her in childhood; I recollect, also, how she played all the long, sunny morning, and how as she played she sang for very joy like the birds, just as she does now in later life, and then, as now,

every one who loves her is the happier for her song. But despite all Bona's mirth and light-heartedness, before that June day ended I discovered that there was an earnest side to her character. The circumstance which revealed this somehow seems more real to me than many things that occurred last month.

It happened in this way: I was spending a few days with my friend, Ruth Gaylord, and while we middle-aged women sat on the shady balcony and talked of the by-gone days of our youth, the child wandered from the garden into the meadow. When at last we sought her she was sitting on the grass, surrounded by nodding daisies and blossoming clover, pink and white. The air was fragrant with new-mown hay. Out of the happy distance came the silvery sound of swinging scythes, and the echo of merry laughter. Oh, yes, I remember it all so well, even how the bees hummed as they darted in and out of the honey-sweet clover, and how the birds sang as they flew from bough to bough of the fringe of elder-bushes that divided the meadow from the high-road. But little Bona had no thought that hour for bird, bee, nor flower. She

was intent on looking at the vapory white clouds floating above the far-away mountain peaks, that lifted their blue heights so close to heaven. "They are angels," the child softly whispered, as she pointed up, and the smile on her sweet face deepened, and her arms reached out as though to grasp the white-winged clouds.

No one refuted little Bona's assertion. Ruth Gaylord, my friend, who strove to fill the place of a mother to the motherless darling, was not a woman who inclined to tell a child that clouds heralded storms. On the contrary, she was one of those who recognized that clouds, whether viewed by the eye of the soul or of the mind, are to God's children always messengers. For it is written, "He doth set His bow in the cloud." And in the darkest hour of trial the ear of faith hears words of comfort from Him who dwells in the cloud, and veils merciful purposes with His thick clouds. This is why

> "From grief comes glory
> As the rainbow from the cloud."

CHAPTER II

BONA'S diary contains but brief reference to her childhood, and the few details I record regarding it are culled from letters written by Ruth Gaylord, to whose care she was entrusted by her father when she was little more than five years old.

This friend of mine, Ruth Gaylord, was a most earnest-minded woman. She felt no small degree of awe and reverence for little people who were still strangers to this world of sorrow and sin. Hence as was to be expected, her heart was deeply stirred at the thought of training a child who had but just taken her first look on life. The child herself, meanwhile, was like a traveller who sets forth in the dewy freshness of morning with no forecasting of what may await her before the close of the day, or the end of the journey.

But this is not what I sat down to write; this is the place for extracts from the package of time-stained letters open before me.

The first is dated on the very day of little Bona's arrival at Miss Ruth's home in N——. It begins:

"I expect my little charge this afternoon. Everything is ready for her, even to the tiny chest of drawers in which I kept my own childish treasures. Her little bed, with its white hangings, downy pillows, and snowy coverlet, looks like a nest ready for a bird. The child's name is Bona Dunbar. She was born five years ago on Easter Sunday. God grant the old tradition may prove true in her case, and that thus she may be blessed with the happy heart the Lord is said to give Sunday children. But this seems doubtful, for Bona was bereaved of her mother when she was but two years old, and I have often observed that 'a child's life, where a mother's love is wanting, is like a day with a cloud over the sun.'"

Later on in the same letter my friend tells:

"Bona has come. Already I feel a vast amount of love and tenderness for the darling. She is a most engaging child, and she seems to know by instinct that she can trust me, and Hannah, my maid. She felt

quite at home before she had been with us an hour. As I sat on the balcony after dinner, it was pleasant to hear her little feet pattering about the garden walks, and the sound of her voice and merry laughter were like the chime of joy-bells set a-ringing in that usually quiet place. When the dew began to fall I called her in, and it being her first night in this new home I went upstairs with her when bed-time came rather than sending Hannah. After she was undressed, without waiting for a suggestion, she came and knelt by my side and clasped her little hands, while with bowed head and closed eyes, in a soft, low voice she offered her evening prayer. It was a tender sight, that little white-robed, kneeling figure. I thought of the spirit within her that would never die; and I resolved then and there that this child the Lord had sent to me should be dear to me as my own kin. When her prayer ended, I lifted her in my arms and carried her to the little bed which Hannah had set up in the alcove of my own room. Before she nestled her head down into the soft pillow she sat up quite straight, and, taking my hand, she drew my face down toward hers and put her cheek against

mine in the sweetest, most loving way, as in a half-whisper she asked: 'Are you a mamma?'

"For a moment I hardly knew how to reply, and then I said: 'No, dear child, but I love you very dearly, and I will be as a mother to you, with God's help.' Even as I spoke she fell asleep, and in her sleep she smiled, and truly I believe she will continue to smile all night long, and she will awake smiling, I am sure. For, unless I am greatly mistaken, this little Bona Dunbar is like the dear children of whom we read, that our Lord, when on earth, took them in His arms and blessed them, and said: 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

CHAPTER III

I WOULD fain continue these extracts, it is so pleasant to tell of a happy childhood. And however uneventful the period there is always freshness and variety in the story, for children are like flowers, one never finds two alike. Nevertheless, I must not tarry over Bona's early history, and I decide to pass by silently much of interest that I find recorded in those old letters. But in spite of my resolve I must insert the following extract which portrays Bona soon after she entered on her school-days:

"The child is an apt scholar," Ruth Gaylord writes, "and she brings home weekly reports which are most gratifying. And the best part of it is, she takes pains to rank thus high, for, while she seems to learn as easily as a bird sings, it is not done without effort. She understands, too, the reasons for this effort are that she may use the powers of mind that God has given her, so that they may grow stronger just as her body grows stronger by plenty of exercise,

and that she may acquire the knowledge she will need when a woman.

"Naturally her bright mind is never weary asking questions, and half the time she finds her own answers. Young as she is, she has discovered that faith and knowledge are very different things. She is deeply impressed also with the truth that the Lord Christ is the God of Love, and that the love which He brought into the world is the love which He commands us to feel for each other; and that selfishness is the root of evil. As is so often the Lord's way in dealing with His children, Bona's acceptance of this truth has led her into perplexity. Yesterday she came to me greatly troubled by the difficulty of obeying this command to love every one. The truth is, she finds it hard to feel any affection for a school-mate, a proud, overbearing girl. I could only counsel her to avoid the feeling of dislike, and to remember that if after repeated effort she found she could not love her companion, she could at least try to find something to respect in the girl's character, for, as I told her, some one good and trustworthy trait could be found in well-nigh every one.

"Bona seems young to grasp my meaning, but I had good proof later on that she understood. She was sitting on a low stool at my feet when we had the talk on this subject. As I spoke, she drooped her head upon her hand, her elbow rested on my knee, and she sat awhile without uttering a word; at last she looked up at me with an earnest light shining in her dark eyes, as she asked: 'Do you ever do wrong, Miss Ruth? Do you ever find it hard to love people?'

"With much seriousness I answered: 'Yes, indeed, Bona, it is my sorrow that I do.' At these words she looked at me for a moment as though half-frightened, and then her head drooped again. I did not wonder at the half-feared look, it is always so difficult for children to understand that an older person, whom they love and trust, can do wrong.

"Presently she raised her lovely face, and with her elbows still planted on my knee, she gazed long and earnestly into my eyes with a wistful expression, which with all my trying I think only a mother could have fully understood. When she spoke it was to say softly: 'When you do wrong

does God love you?' And as the wistful look deepened she added, still more softly: 'When I do wrong does He love me?'

"'Yes, Bona,' I replied, 'God loves you dearly and always.'

"'Are you quite sure?' the gentle voice pleaded.

"'Quite sure,' I said, 'for the Bible tells me so; it tells, too, that it pleases God to have us feel sure of His love, and of His forgiveness of our sins, when we are sorry for them, and ask His pardon for Christ's sake.'

"But my words did not quite satisfy Bona, the wistful look was not yet gone; the glorious truth had not yet found complete entrance into her young heart. When at length she grasped it, her thoughtfulness increased, and as though speaking to herself she said: 'He is sorry when I do wrong; He is pleased when I ask to be forgiven; He will help me to do right, if I do my part, and try to overcome evil by good. Oh, it is beautiful!' And she laid her head on my lap while the long lashes half hid her shining eyes. After a silent time she sprang up suddenly, and her face was radiant, and her voice joyous as that of a

lark, as she exclaimed: 'Oh, I am so glad, and I will try to be good, I will try to love every one.'

"A minute later her feet were scampering over the lawn to the meadow, from which she returned, just before the tea-bell rang, with her hands full of buttercups, daisies, goldthread, and blue and white violets. And she came home as she went, singing: 'I am so glad, so glad.'"

This early gladness, which, as Ruth Gaylord wrote, blossomed out of the child's recognition of God's love, and her own desire to serve and please Him, never died out of Bona's soul. In all the after years of her life, even in the midst of trial, her sorrowing has always been linked with rejoicing. She never forgets that

> "God's in His heaven,
> All's right with the world."

CHAPTER IV

THE fact that Bona kept no full record of her childhood was not due to any lack of affection. Indeed there was never a more loyal, loving heart than hers. Soon after her marriage I learned this. She had been reading aloud to me a story of a mother's devotion.

When it ended she sat for many minutes without speaking, looking out of the wide-open window toward the river and the distant hills. She was wont to be thoughtful, but the sadness in her expression was unusual; observing it, I laid aside my work and crossed the room, put my arms around her and drew her head down on to my shoulder, and as I kissed her, I asked gently: "Dear child, do you remember your mother?"

She did not reply for some time. She seemed trying to recall some shadowy recollection too elusive to grasp. By and by she shook her head, as she said: "Some-

times I think I remember, but when I try to define a form, a person, the memory vanishes, and then I know it is not an individuality, but the sense of a love, a tenderness, a great beautiful care over me, like a protective wing, that I call mother," and again Bona was silent.

And yet, although apparently absorbed in thought, she caught the first sound of Edward's approaching footsteps. O yes! You may be sure she heard that. "It is singular the personality there is in a footstep, and steps vary as much as the human face." As Bona lifted her head she dashed away some tear-drops from her eyes, but she smiled in her own bright, winsome way, as she kissed my cheek and said: "Do not feel sorry; you know dear Miss Ruth interpreted mother-love for me, and now," she added softly, "I have it in reality, you are so good, so kind, so dear." Without waiting for my reply she exclaimed, "My husband is coming," and a still brighter smile was reflected from this knowledge, as she sped swiftly from the parlor to the front door to meet him. But amid all her joy at Edward's return—he had been absent since early morning—she did not forget to turn,

as she left the room, to throw me a light kiss over her shoulder.

But I am running far in advance of my story. It is of the years that preceded Bona's marriage I must tell, before I pass on to the happy time when she became my son's wife, and the joy and heart of his home. Returning then to the broken thread of my narrative, I record that Bona was little more than sixteen years old when Ruth Gaylord died. That was a solemn spring and sad summer to Bona. She loved Miss Ruth dearly, but even in the darkest hour of her sorrow she was singularly unselfish, and she found comfort in the knowledge that it was only for herself she had to lament: for Miss Ruth all was well. Bona also strove to remember Miss Ruth's counsel, and she tried to think of the blessings with which God's love encompassed her, rather than dwelling on the happiness He had taken away.

According to Ruth Gaylord's wish Bona was sent to a boarding-school in the neighborhood of M——, where she remained until she was eighteen. She was then transferred to the care of her mother's only brother, a professor in a New England college. By

way of parenthesis, I mention just here that Bona's father had married a wealthy widow lady soon after the child went to Ruth Gaylord, and that he lived almost entirely abroad, seldom visiting his native land more than once during half a dozen years. Thus, except for a liberal allowance, Bona, so far as personal knowledge of her father was concerned, might have been an orphan. Neither had she ever seen anything of her uncle and his wife; and the life that awaited her in their home was an entirely new page in her experience. But she felt no dread of the future. She interpreted it by the past, and save for the sorrow caused by Ruth Gaylord's death, that past had consisted of happy, peaceful years.

It so happened, just before Bona's arrival at her uncle's, my son Edward, who had recently graduated from the theological seminary, had been invited to supply for six months the pulpit of the college chapel. The very first time the young people met they were mutually attracted. And, almost before Edward realized why, his steps inclined to tread the same path day after day, and that path led toward Professor Smith's house.

Meanwhile as time went on, more than one in Edward's congregation observed that the young minister was getting into a habit of looking down into the pew occupied by Professor Smith, his wife and niece. They also observed that Bona Dunbar, instead of looking straight up to the preacher, as had been her habit the first few Sundays after she came to H——, had suddenly taken to sitting with her eyes cast down and her head somewhat bowed. In view of these circumstances there was little surprise expressed when Edward and Bona's engagement was announced and speedily followed by their marriage, which was greatly to the contentment of all concerned.

But again I am running in advance of my story, and without delay I turn to Bona's diary, where I find recorded her introduction to my son, and her first impression of him. I find also brief notes regarding the progress of their acquaintance which soon glided into the friendship that is the sure foundation of a love like theirs. But I will let Bona tell her own love story in the extracts I copy.

CHAPTER V

A MAIDEN'S thoughts are pure and holy, like a white flower, when they up-spring in a heart sweet and innocent as Bona's. Hence I take a fresh, unsullied page, as I begin the notes I promised to pass on from her diary.

Under the date November 1, 187—, just six months before her wedding-day, I find recorded: "We dined yesterday at Professor R.'s, and there I met the young minister Aunt Annie so greatly admires. He has awakened an unusual interest in my mind. Somehow from the moment I heard his voice and saw his face, I felt a desire to talk with him of the things I care for most. Aunt Annie asked me this morning if I thought him handsome. No, it is not exactly handsome I think him, it is something beyond and better than that, and it is this something that I cannot describe by words; it is the intangible beauty that God gives to those who love and serve Him, whether they be man or woman.

"In figure Mr. Morgan is tall, and of a commanding presence, even now in his youth. His complexion is fair; he has a firm mouth, and deep-set, thoughtful, calm blue eyes, that glance from below his brow with an earnest expression that sinks into my heart."

A month later: "I have known Edward Morgan hardly longer than a rounded month, and yet I feel as though always we had been dear and trusted companions. When I meet him I am so glad, it seems as though all the bells in the town were ringing out a peal of joy. I had such a beautiful talk with him yesterday. I told him of a dream I had a few nights ago, and looking up at him I asked: 'What are dreams?' Before he had time to reply, I added: 'In some respects they certainly are like the scenes of life in another world, and thus like spiritual life. Are we then to look upon spiritual life as dreamy and unreal?'"

"He answered so decidedly, 'No, indeed, dreams are unlike spiritualities in the most important respect. "All power of self-determination is suspended and absent in dreams. Things go on and we go with them, at their own will. We do not interfere with them

by our personal will at all. Just the opposite of this is spiritual life. There the personality and the power of self determination is distinct and positive, and our activity is subject to our own conscious control."'

"But I cannot write all Edward Morgan said, and yet I must not omit, even if it does take time, his explanation of Jacob's dream, 'the ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.' He said the ladder meant 'the Word.' Nevertheless he thought Jacob only saw it in a dream, while we are permitted to see it with our waking reason, and thus it becomes 'a type resting on a foundation solid as earth, and ascending by steps built of the very substance of truth.' And then he reminded me that 'angels mean messengers,' and that the angels ascending and descending are emblems of good influences that come down to us along its rounds, and arise with us if we will only go up with them.

"I am so sorry Aunt Annie interrupted Edward Morgan's sermonette, as she playfully calls his serious talks. But for all auntie's fun-making I do dearly enjoy talking with him about the subjects I hold most sacred. To-night, as we were coming home

from the Wednesday evening lecture, I asked him to define religion. I can never forget the earnestness of his voice as he replied: 'Religion, why, it is but to know, to worship, and to love God, and from a true love to God springs all love of goodness, and, therefore, all happiness.'"

CHAPTER VI

AS a sequel to the glimpse afforded by Bona's diary of her feelings toward my son, during the first weeks of their acquaintance, it is but fitting to refer to his early impressions of her. I heard from him frequently that winter, and in every letter he mentioned the dear girl. At first he merely wrote of her as a blithe, joyous young creature, and yet uncommonly thoughtful. Then came more of detail, until at length, after telling of an evening spent at her uncle's, he asked: "Does not beauty of person, as well as of character, confer a benefit upon us by the simple fact of being beautiful?"

I replied by the question: "Is Miss Bona Dunbar a beauty?"

My son's answer came in due time. He wrote: "I hardly know how to picture her. She is less striking in feature and figure than many of the young ladies I constantly meet in society. But she has an expression of

quicker sensibility, and a winsome, lovable manner that all the women I know lack, save yourself, dear mother. This is why her uncle and aunt use terms of endearment when they speak to her, and why they call her little. For she is not little; indeed in stature she is rather above than below the average height, and she is plump and in perfect health, with a complexion of the finest texture, exquisitely soft and smooth. And yet, while she is so fair and blooming, she is not a blonde who will fade early. Best of all, she has a bright spirit and a guileless heart that admits neither fear nor suspicion of evil. A glance into her clear, truthful brown eyes tells this. It tells too that she has a soul ready 'to meet life's everydayness with a smile, and high thoughts for little duties, and it is in the fulfillment of simple routine that we all need, more than anywhere, the quickening influence of the highest thoughts.'

"There is just a spark of impatience in her temper, and enough self-will to accentuate her individuality, but I repeat, always she has a sunshiny way, and she looks up at one with the sweetest expression I ever beheld. Surely, such a clear, bright look can only

come from a heart where noble and good aims rule, and gentle, kindly affections abide. Nevertheless, according to the established code of beauty, no one would describe Bona Dunbar in stronger terms than pretty. Yes, very pretty, and sweet and fresh as a wild rose or a blue violet.

"In the matter of age she is about nineteen, but so far as heart is concerned she is one of those who will never grow old."

Edward's next weekly letter tells of a long walk, and the beauty of the winter landscape, which Bona Dunbar was so quick to appreciate. "And yet," he wrote, "the afternoon was not remarkable in any way": but, he added, "she has a nature that finds hidden beauty in the common and the insignificant. . This was tested as we turned homeward. It was a little early for sunset, and there was faint promise of brilliant color when the time came; for the sky had become gradually overcast by a soft mist-like veil of steel blue which harmonized perfectly with the snowy landscape. The only bit of brightness was over toward the southwest, where a few clouds were slightly tinged with a rosy blush. But it was enough to suggest the query: 'What makes

the difference in the tints of coloring at sunrise and sunset? I never have seen what I call a radiant dawn,' I said, 'not one like many of those sunsets which bring to the lips the word "glorious!" In the morning we wait for the sun, and the sudden flood of light almost effaces the memory of the earlier beauty of the clouds; but the moment when the sun sinks out of sight it has no such over-powering splendor. I have looked at the evening clouds of one of our golden sunsets until it seemed to me that all over the sky they were greedily gathering—they most which were nearest to the sinking sun—all of his splendor that they could hold to keep it while they could, giving it up slowly and reluctantly, clinging to the last pale tints, and finally yielding them up so sadly.'"

"As I concluded this long harangue, I repeated the question with which I began it, and as I looked at Bona she responded by one of the bright smiles that always seems to diffuse a luminous light over her entire being. It is beautiful to note the way in which a flash from her mind will thus brighten her cheeks, light her eyes, play over her lips, and even seem to radiate from

her very presence. When she spoke, the sweet accent of her voice, the easy grace and refinement of her manner were never more charming.

"'I can only reply,' she said, 'in the language of symbolism; surely that explains the difference of coloring at the sun's rising and setting—the earth seems to turn away from the sun that sinks, but it is ready to meet him in his coming, and the getting ready, should be our work in all our nights,' she said softly, 'for the night cometh to every one.'"

"'Yes,' I answered: 'for every spot of earth it is day when it is turned to the sun, and night when it has turned away; and this is precisely the same with the spiritual night and day of the soul.'

"But I have told you enough, dear mother, for you to understand how in talking with Bona Dunbar the subjects we discuss range from light to shadow, playfulness to earnestness, but the earnestness predominates.'

CHAPTER VII

IT was through reading these letters that I knew God was in Edward and Bona's thoughts those days, and that life was full and solemn with holy meaning. It was easy also, for my mother's heart, to read, between the lines, that my son and Bona Dunbar had come to the crisis that occurs when earnest souls pausè on the threshold of existence, striving to define the place they occupy in the world, the object of life, and their relations to humanity.

It is wont to be a difficult place, and those who pass through it safely, pressed forward by the impetus of life's power, are among the blessed. If perchance, those days, Edward, as is the way with men, spoke by the head, Bona's utterances were by the heart, and head and heart combined disposed their minds to the noble and true, and inclined their souls to high purposes and unselfish aspirations. Thus it happened the gate of the beautiful and the good opened

wide for my son and his future wife, and they looked within, they looked up, and on.

When at last their conversation turned to subjects of a more strictly personal character, they did not know how it came about; they glided into it as imperceptibly as the falling of the evening twilight, or the deepening of shadows in the woods. Meanwhile the mystery of the future was shut to them —it always is to young lovers—they interpreted it by their happy present, and their words were as a pleasant song, set to the tune of hope. Even now it thrills my old heart with a warm rush of sympathy as I read in Bona's diary of that happy time.

The new year was near its dawning when she wrote: "Dear old year! I have been so happy during your reign I do not want you to go." Abruptly she adds, "A strange thing happened when Edward Morgan bade me good-night. He held my hand for a moment in a firm gentle clasp, and, I do not know why, but that hand-clasp suddenly filled my heart with a joyous trembling— and yet it made me feel almost timid, and I never felt so before toward Edward Morgan. When I gained courage to look up at him I did it shyly, and my confusion increased, for

he gazed down at me with a questioning look, and there was a new expression in his eyes and a new tone in his voice. It was like a note of tenderness, and when we parted he said so softly, 'God bless you, little Bona.' Always before he has called me Miss Dunbar or Miss Bona. I wonder why to-night he forgot the Miss; I wonder why he called me 'little.' I am quite as tall as Aunt Annie, and I am nineteen years old, and that is not young; oh, no, not at all young. I hope he does not think me childish. He has never treated me as though he did. He always talks to me as though I were his equal in understanding. Of course I am not, and yet there was never any one—not even Miss Ruth—to whom I could tell my dearest thoughts as I can to Edward Morgan."

Two days later: "Can I be the same girl —Bona Dunbar—that I was this morning? As I look out of the window I see the same stars that smiled down on me last night, and yet the brief space of time that has elapsed since then has witnessed an entire transformation in my inner and outer life. Such a wonderful, beautiful thing has come to me! It seems too glad, too precious to

be true. Edward Morgan loves me! He has asked me to be his wife. He says if I want to make him a happy, contented man, I must be his. In reply I could only look straight into his eyes. My heart was too full for spoken words. But he understood —and—oh, I am so happy! There is only just the one shadow. I wish, oh, I wish I were more worthy of his love. I wish I knew more; I wish I were better. When I tried to tell Edward this he would not listen, but he drew me close to him; he put his arm around me, and he took me just as I am, faults and all, into the shelter of his love forever. What he said is too sacred to repeat, even in this my own heart-book. Enough, he is satisfied. I could not help knowing it, as with head erect, shining eyes, and an uplifted look of thankfulness on his strong, beautiful face, he took my hand and led me across the hall to Uncle Stephen's study. I think my uncle must have guessed our story, for, when in response to Edward's knock he bade us enter, he did not look surprised to see me coming toward him holding Edward's hand; neither did he seem surprised when Edward said: 'She has promised to be my wife!'

And Uncle Stephen laid his hand on my head, and as he blessed me there were tears in his eyes. And then Aunt Annie came and added her congratulations—and, oh, I am so happy.

"I do so long to tell dear Miss Ruth. She was always so glad when I was happy, and this joy of love is something so beautiful. Surely she and my angel mother must know. Oh, yes, surely in heaven they are glad because of my joy."

CHAPTER VIII

I TURN from Bona's diary to copy a letter I received from her Aunt Annie soon after the happy engagement had been announced to the little world of a college town. Mrs. Smith wrote:

"It is pleasant to see their happiness, as it is to see all true lovers in the early freshness of life's morning. There is evidently perfect content, perfect trust in Bona's heart, and in Edward's, too. However he may be occupied he is conscious of her slightest movement. Not the least word she utters escapes him. At the sound of her voice his glance is always toward her, and there is an expression of calm satisfaction on his face that tells better than any amount of verbal protestation, that she is the joy of his life, the delight of his eyes. But, despite their mutual and evident admiration for one another, despite the fact that love is plainly written in every line of their happy faces, it is a love pure and free

from all sentimentality and folly. Indeed, they are most quiet lovers; they never make much of one another before people, at the same time they are natural, frank, and affectionate in manner. Still, I repeat, they make no display of devotion; there is never anything like a caress in public. In truth, the sweetness of caresses to them are their entire sacredness."

Happy days pass quickly, and the time appointed for my son's marriage was not long in coming. When the blessed day dawned it proved a rare morning, and at noontime it was the perfection of sunny spring weather and breezy freshness. According to Bona's wish it was a most quiet wedding. The occasion was too sacred to be disturbed by outward display. Her bridal robe was only a simple white mull, with touches of soft white lace about the wrists and neck. The only ornament she wore was a white rose twisted into the masses of her light-brown hair, which were half-concealed by the gossamer folds of her bridal veil. But while there was no ostentatious show, flowers abounded in profusion; they even carpeted the aisle of the church up which Bona walked, leaning on her un-

cle's arm, and looking, as her Aunt Annie wrote me, "like a white lily herself." And there, kneeling before God's altar, my son Edward and Bona Dunbar plighted troth "for better, for worse," until death should part them. A few minutes later they left the church husband and wife.

As they passed out of the porch and down the wide steps, they were encompassed by sunshine; not a shadow fell aslant their path. Yes, they were entirely happy. It was a wedding without tears. Neither were there any formal congratulations; it was all quiet, earnest, and sincere. Indeed, how could it have been otherwise when my son's wife was the bride!

It has always been difficult for me to realize that I was not with Edward and Bona in bodily presence that hour, for so truly my heart was there. Then, too, the scene was all made so vivid to my mind by description, and without so much as a week's delay the happy couple came home that I might share their joy.

Before and after their marriage Edward and Bona urged me to leave the old homestead and to come and live with them in the parsonage. But I was not unlearned

in life, and I refused, and I am sure I was wise. I am sure I was right in maintaining that every woman should have the opportunity of ordering her own home after her own idea, and every home should have but one mistress. So it was decided that after a brief visit with me, my son and his wife were to begin housekeeping by themselves in the newly-furnished and freshly-painted parsonage.

They seemed young to my eyes to thus enter on the responsibilities of life. Edward was only twenty-six, and Bona's years did not count full twenty until several months after her marriage. But, after all, sometimes I have thought, as Miss Mulock writes, that "a double blessing falls on unions like theirs," for while "a right and holy marriage, a true love marriage, be it early or late, is, must be, sanctified and happy, yet those have the best chance of happiness who, meeting on the very threshold of life, enter upon its duties together with free, fresh hearts, easily moulded the one to the other, rich in all the riches of youth, acute to enjoy, brave and hopeful to endure." And such were my son and his wife, and God has indeed blessed them.

Edward could not have chosen a more inviting season than May in which to bring his bride to her new home. May is the month, too, when our village seems most appropriately named. And that year during the season of early verdure the very atmosphere was pervaded by an emerald transparency, for, while there was an infinite variety of hues in the spring foliage, they were all in harmony. Green seemed to float in the air and to blend with the blue of the sky.

Greenville was then, as it is now, a scattered village, emphasized, however, like so many New England towns, by a wide, elm-shaded, central street, or more properly, avenue. The houses all stand far enough back to allow of a good-sized garden plot in front, and without exception the door-yards—as the village people call them—were ornamented by flowering plants and shrubs that varied in number and rareness according to the taste or means of their owners. But although some were costly and uncommon, the old-fashioned and well-known were, after all, the sweetest and the dearest. For what can be more fragrant than cinnamon and Provence roses, and syringas, white

and pure as snow-flakes. The lilacs too are lovely in the spring when they toss their purple clusters in response to the slightest breeze. At other seasons they are intrusive, ungainly bushes, save as one keeps in mind the safe nesting-places they afford for robins, bluebirds, and sparrows. This was what Edward's bride said, as she came tripping up the garden-walk by the side of her tall, broad-shouldered husband, who, although his height measured six feet lacking an inch, was overtopped by the lilacs.

I was on the door-step waiting to greet Edward and Bona. Truly she was a vision of youth and innocence; and her first action inspired my love, for she clasped my hand with a most confiding pressure. And then she lifted her bright eyes and looked at me with a question in their starry depths that seemed to read my very heart. It was as though she sought to gauge the nature of her husband's mother before she asked for the precious boon of love. At least this was how I interpreted that look, and in reply I studied the sweet, uplifted face with a scrutiny which would have abashed a less sincere, truthful person. What I saw satisfied me, for, as I have said, no one could

doubt Bona's sincerity when they looked into her frank, honest brown eyes, and met her ready smile. The simple fact is, I was convinced then, and I have never changed my opinion, that while my son's wife was entirely free from anything like childishness, she had a most child-like soul, and a pure heart from which proceeds the fruit of a good life.

Yes, I felt sure from the hour of her arrival, that she was one of those of whom it is written, "their angels do always behold the face of the Father in heaven." And as we entered the house hand in hand, I thanked God that this sweet young creature called me "Mother."

CHAPTER IX

EDWARD had chosen to drive with Bona in the phaeton from M——, leaving the luggage to follow, and, although it did not come until long after our dinner hour, Bona was not at all disturbed. She appeared at the sound of the bell, looking as sweet and pretty in her simple travelling frock of gray serge as she could have done had she been attired in the most elaborate bridal costume. It was delightful to see her enthusiastic interest in her new surroundings, and she was most eager to hear every detail of her husband's boyhood.

She asked question after question, was answered, and asked something in return. Before the day ended she had won the goodwill of my middle-aged, sedate servingwomen, Ann and Kate; and Thomas, the old gardener, who had grown gray in my service, was no less pleased with "Mr. Edward's wife."

As I noted Bona's grace and sweetness I

did not wonder my son was proud of his choice. And what gave me greater gladness than her personal loveliness was the mutual confidence, and a certain repose, that was most marked in the young husband and wife's treatment of one another. They were so evidently of one mind and of one heart, indeed it was difficult to tell which held the other dearest. Even when their words were most light-hearted and gay, there was a note of earnestness underneath which told that they had entered on married life loving that within each other that belonged to the eternal—the spirit which never dies—"the soul which is the reality of existence."

After a habit of his boyhood, my son came tapping at the door of my dressing-room that night. I bade him enter, and as he leaned over the back of my low rocking-chair, I looked up at his happy face and said: "You have won a treasure, my boy, greater than falls to the lot of most men. Be sure you value it enough."

"Don't you think I do, mother?" he asked gravely.

"Yes," I replied, and I meant it, "but a woman's heart is a most tender thing; even the best, most loving man sometimes forgets

how tender. And a woman, let her be good as she may, has got to put up with the life her husband makes for her." And I think I did well to caution my son, for a man needs to constantly remember that when he marries he takes much love and should give much.

It is time I turned from these details to explain how it happened that Edward came to fill the place of pastor to our Greenville church. It is easily understood, when one notes the fact, that village and family life are apt to run parallel, and as in a family, years unmarked by change are wont to be followed by a period, during which one and another of the older generation pass away, so in a village, after long continued tranquillity, the established order of affairs is suddenly disturbed by the death of one and another of the prominent old residents. This had been emphatically the case in Greenville the year that prefaced my son's marriage.

First, the aged and beloved minister, Dr. Maxwell, who for years had gone in and out among the people of his charge, tender as a shepherd in the guidance of his flock, was prostrated by fatal illness, and while the

hearts of the villagers were striving to recognize the hand of Providence as a hand of Love—even when it smites—another blow fell, and Judge Wolcott, the long-time leader in all matters of secular interest, also sickened and died. When the grief-stricken community began to look about for a man to fill Dr. Maxwell's place, desire turned to my son, and assent was unanimous, when it was proposed to ask him to become pastor of the church he had attended during the years of his childhood and youth.

It was not the sort of settlement Edward had looked forward to, but when he thought of me—his widowed mother—and of the home of his boyhood, and the village people, he had no heart to refuse. Meanwhile the vacancy left by Judge Wolcott's death was filled by the Judge's son, Tom, who no sooner heard of Edward's proposed settlement in Greenville than he declared his determination to also return to his native village.

Like my son, Tom was accompanied by a bride. I knew nothing of the girl of Tom's choice, save that she was an heiress and a beauty. Judge Wolcott, and his father before him, had lived in an interesting old-fashioned mansion at the end of the village

street, and even after Tom's efforts to modernize it to suit his wife's taste, it retained enough of the colonial aspect to impart an air of aristocracy and importance to the somewhat rambling building. To please young Mrs. Wolcott, white paint and green blinds were exchanged for a warm tint of Tuscan red, which certainly imparted a sense of good cheer and comfort, as one caught a glimpse of its pointed roof, and overhanging gables, through the openings in the boughs of the stately row of maples which guarded the front entrance, like watchful sentinels never off duty. In honor of these trees the old homestead was known all the countryside over as "The Maples."

As for the interior of the house, the furnishing was somewhat massive, but rich in carving and the warm coloring that comes with age into mahogany that has been frequently polished and well cared for. To my taste it was more interesting as a home before, rather than after, Tom's renovations, when, as so often occurs where wealth abounds, one felt as soon as they entered the wide hall the atmosphere of money and what it can accomplish. In fact, every detail of luxury and decoration proclaimed

the touch of the "artistic furnisher" Tom had employed. There were none of the sweet contrivances, nothing of the personal element love infuses into mute things which so pervaded my son's home.

CHAPTER X

ALTHOUGH there had been so many changes in the Wolcotts' home, the spacious rooms continued through the days of early spring and autumn to be warmed by the most delightful of all heaters—open fireplaces—where great logs of singing oak smouldered all day long, breaking at nightfall into heaps of glowing fragments, which exuded the spicy, resinous odor, so dear to all lovers of wood-fires.

I found Tom sitting before a cheerful blaze in the breakfast-room when I called to bid them welcome, a few days after he and his young wife's arrival at "The Maples." And though the May morning was bright, and all growing things were coming on rapidly, the air, even at the season of mid-spring, is keen in New England, and while it was sunny and warm enough for an open window, it was also cool enough for that bright fire on the hearth. It was early for a call, but the Greenville people

were accustomed to early hours. Then, too, Tom Wolcott has been like an adopted son to me all his life, or at least ever since his own mother died, and without hesitation I followed the impulse of my heart, which led me to greet his home-coming with prompt expressions of pleasure and affection.

Tom received me with his wonted warmth, but I felt that his mind was not on our conversation, and his glance turned constantly toward the door with a look of impatience. This, by the way, was natural enough, when for almost an hour he had momentarily expected it to open to admit his wife. Tom was handsome in youth, as he is in middle-life, though none of his features are specially fine. His eyes are dark, and when roused they were, and they are now, capable of a flash of either anger or humor, which once seen is not easily forgotten. But it was seldom, even when young, one caught a glimpse of his fiery spirit, for while he impressed one as a man with a strong will, he had a certain lazy audacity of strength, and an air of indifference when in general society; and yet, his broad brow and square chin denoted plenty of intelligence and a resolution akin to obstinacy. One could

see that he was quick-tempered too, by the way which, when the clock struck ten and his wife had not appeared, he tossed aside the paper he had been reading before I came, and crossed the room to the open window, and looked out with an expression of discontent not at all suitable in a young husband, and the master of a stately, well-appointed home. But good nature immediately asserted itself as he saw the flowers fresh and fragrant in the morning sunshine, and with a low laugh, he leaped from the window to the walk that edged a flower-bed, blue with forget-me-nots. A minute later he re-entered the house, in a more decorous manner, however, although his hands were filled with flowers on which the dew still lingered; and then, with a lover's instinct—for Tom, despite his occasional impatience, was at heart still a lover—he strewed the flowers in and out about the dainty china and shining silver of the breakfast service, with no regard to the snowy damask cloth of finest linen, and the orderly arrangements which Mrs. Barnes, the housekeeper, had herself superintended.

Tom had but just completed his task when at last Dora appeared. As she ad-

vanced I did not wonder he admired the tall, graceful young creature. Certainly she was very handsome. A strictly classical eye perhaps would have called her too thin for her height, but she was so well-proportioned, so flexible and graceful, the defect would have been noticed by only a keen observer. Her complexion was dark, but smooth and soft. Ordinarily she was pale, and her dark eyes lacked lustre, but when interested or pleased they brightened, and at such times a rosy color flushed her cheeks.

Dora's manners were reserved and somewhat haughty and cold, but there was no sign of coldness or haughtiness in manner or look as she met me, neither was there when her gaze turned to the flower-strewn breakfast-table. Still, there was no look of pleasure as she said: "Oh, Tom, what a litter!" And carelessly she pushed the blue blossoms away from the edge of the breakfast tray. And, when the long-delayed meal was concluded, she left the table without so much as a glance at her husband's morning offering.

Tom was disappointed, I plainly perceived, and yet he did not say so. Perhaps it would

have been wiser if he had, for while Dora was not the kind of young person who loves a flower for a flower's sake—oh, no, not at all—I think if she had known it would please Tom, she would have striven to show interest in the delicate attention, as well as in many other insignificant things and events that were of value to him, and thus she would have avoided later on in their life together, much of what the world calls "conjugal dissatisfaction, bickering, and disappointment."

I felt gravely troubled by that my first glimpse of Tom and Dora Wolcott's domestic life. I knew he was not used to indifference, and that he was too proud and too indolent a man to make any effort to discover whether its cause were due to lack of love on Dora's part, or simply the result of a nature that had never been taught to adapt itself to the likes and dislikes of the people with whom she lived. And yet, unless Tom did convince himself of Dora's love, I knew they would drift with every passing day farther and farther apart; as, alas! they did.

I have described thus fully my call on the Wolcotts and their home, because Dora

and my son's wife soon became warm friends, and Dora's name will henceforth frequently appear in this record. As for Tom, he and Edward had been companions from childhood, and on through their school and college days. On my way home that May morning I paid another visit, which I refer to because it was on another bride and groom—Dr. Lee and his wife. They were new-comers to Greenville, and they soon filled an important place in the social life of our village, and a very prominent place in Tom and Dora's lives, and thus in Bona's, for, as I said, she and Dora Wolcott speedily became friends, although they were as unlike as a rose is unlike a violet.

CHAPTER XI

IT was certainly singular that the three young men, my son, Tom Wolcott, and Dr. Lee, should almost simultaneously have begun to dream of the "domestic affections which are the alphabet of love." Equally singular was the introduction of their three brides into a quiet village like Greenville, all within three months.

The circumstance which led Jack Lee to settle among us was not, however, at all singular. It came about in this way: When the long-time village physician, old Dr. Gray, decided to take a partner, Jack Lee was the young man he selected, and Jack was only too glad to accept the position which provided him with a good practice, as well as a comfortable home, for Dr. Gray's house proved quite large enough for the two households. Hence, while the old Doctor and his maiden sister continued to occupy the eastern portion, the western half afforded ample room for the young physician and his exceedingly pretty wife.

It was a most attractive place in those days; a solid, white-painted, green-blinded house, with a wide porch in front, supported by fluted columns, which a century ago in New England gave a certain importance to its occupants, and a flavor of aristocracy that was enhanced by the straight gravelled walk that led from the gate to the front door.

This walk was bordered by flower-beds that were gay with blossoms from May on to late November. But their beauty and brightness was a mere hint of the real garden, of which one caught a glimpse from the porch, when the doors at either end of the wide hall chanced both to be open at the same time.

What a peep of delight it was for lovers of old-fashioned garden plots. The primness of the walks, unbroken by bend or curve, and of the closely-cut privet hedge, which answered the purpose of fence, might elsewhere have seemed formal, but there they only served to accentuate the rich and varied hues of foxglove, ragged-robin, red poppies, canterbury bells, yellow lilies, four-o'clock, and great gnarled bushes of Provence and cabbage roses, and many other

by-gone favorites that have no existence in a modern flower-garden.

This garden was so dear to Dr. Gray he would not permit the up-rooting of so much as a tulip bulb or root of ribbon-grass. He even insisted that the rosemary, lavender, mint and other savory herbs must be left to form, as they had done for years, a fragrant background of subdued foliage for their gayer companions. All this is a digression —which you must pardon an old woman— from the description I had in mind of Jack Lee and Nan, his wife.

From the time of Jack's arrival in Greenville my sympathy was enlisted for him, for while the satisfaction in my son's settlement as pastor over the village church was so general and cordial, there was a marked lack of enthusiasm in the reception of the young physician. He was pronounced entirely too youthful and inexperienced to be trusted to care for mortal bodies, although the very same people were willing enough to trust the guidance of their immortal souls to my son Edward, who was a year younger than Dr. Lee. While I regretted this distrust of Jack's skill, I never doubted that he would, before he had been two years in Greenville,

overcome this prejudice, as indeed he did, for he was most faithful in everything pertaining to practical life.

Indeed, he had a clear head, and he was most conscientious and never knowingly slighted a professional duty. Added to this he had a happy, contented disposition, calculated to win favor. In appearance he was of the Saxon type; and a more thoroughly English-looking young fellow it would have been impossible to find. His eyes were blue as the sky, and full of merriment and good humor. His complexion fair as a girl's, and his mustache—what there was of it—was yellow-white! His nose aquiline, and all his features most refined, although perhaps a trifle delicate. But in spite of this the vigor of his young manhood asserted itself in his broad shoulders and well-developed figure, and truly he was as strong as a young oak.

As for Nan—Dr. Lee's wife—she came near being a beauty. Her features were perfect, the forehead broad and low, the nose exquisitely straight, the upper lip short and deeply curved, the chin softly rounded, and with the beautiful outlines that made her neck and throat exceedingly lovely.

Her eyes, large and lustrous, were blue, with long lashes; her fair hair grew in wavy abundance. Yes, certainly, Jack Lee's wife was, as the village people said, "a sweet, pretty creature." I remembered the words as I looked at her, and somehow a sigh followed the memory, for it straightway expanded into a fear that while Mrs. Lee was one of the young women who would always have plenty of admirers, she was not one who would prove a true, helpful friend to her husband, nor to any man, either old or young. I was not wont to be thus critical, and I rebuked myself as the fear assumed the form of a mental question. Yet the expression of Nan's fair face, the more I studied it, seemed to justify my foreboding. For, despite her beauty, she had a somewhat insipid face; not that there was any lack of expression, for her feelings showed themselves plainly, but unfortunately the expression of pleasure was apt to spring from some frivolous cause, and the displeasure, as I came to know, was often unreasonable. She had been educated at a fashionable boarding-school, and she belonged to a class of young women easily described. She was "a perfect French scholar," as the phrase goes;

that is, she could write a graceful note in readable French. She was also versed in current phrases, which she uttered as the occasion demanded, with a tolerable accent for one who had never been in Paris, and she read French—at least French novels—with far more facility than she did anything English. She was always ready, too, with a gay repartee when in general society. Altogether a sort of halo of fashion surrounded Nan Lee, for she had a decidedly distinguished air. She never spoke in a loud voice, and her laugh was low, and even musical. And it was no wonder the gaze of her young husband rested on her with fond admiration.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN I entered the Lees' parlor, after my call on Tom Wolcott's bride, Nan made a most charming picture. She was sitting with one elbow resting on the centre-table, her head slightly bowed, as she read a letter outspread before her, and the long lashes that shaded her eyes showed to the best advantage. Evidently dress was a matter of importance to the little bride, and her morning toilette had been made with care. She wore a gown of some soft material that fell in graceful, clinging folds about her slender figure. In color it was a delicate blue, trimmed with dainty embroidery, and girded by a floating ribbon. In her fair hair a blush-rose had been fastened, I knew by Jack's hand. Everything about her was in accord with the spring day, in which there was none of the intense tones of midsummer; none of the broad tints of July. I could but smile as I contrasted the light, airy costume of the physician's young wife with the severe elegance of Dora Wolcott's plain, but cost-

ly, morning robe, and Bona's simple frock of white dimity.

As I walked home, however, graver thoughts filled my mind, as I pondered the three different types of women represented by the three brides. What chief end in life would such a person as Nan Lee seek after? And Dora Wolcott, what would be her highest aim? These were questions that could only be solved by a deeper insight than I possessed. And then I recalled a saying of our old minister's regarding "spirits in prison," by which he meant the bondage we let environ our souls when we give them into the control of any mastering motive.

It was not difficult to discover that at that period of her history Dora was a captive, so far as her soul's life was concerned, to pride and position, and that Nan Lee was in bondage to the strong desire to win admiration and to secure pleasure. But it was not easy to lay hold of even the link of a chain which held my son's wife a prisoner to aught, save the good and lovely. Not that she was perfect. No, she was quick of temper; goodness cost her many a hard struggle, as it does all strong, earnest na-

tures. Often she uttered a hasty word, did a hasty deed; but in spite of this, in her dear heart aspiration has ever dwelt, even though sometimes it may have been like a caged bird, for progress heavenward has been, ever since I first knew her, the rule of her desires. Not only the sense of achievement—Bona has always gone deeper than that—*being* has always meant more to her than *doing*.

"We must be something in order to do something; but we must also do something in order to be something," I heard her say to Edward one day soon after she came to Greenville, and the words may well be called her motto. To grow in soul—that is what she strove after, and she knew it could only be done through conquering difficulties; only through acceptance of the "axe laid at the root" of self-will and superficial self-knowledge—and she yielded her heart to this discipline—and thus truth descending into her heart and mind became life ascending.

She had not been a month in her new home when her influence began to shine like a thread of gold woven into her every-day life; and before the month ended she was known by more than one family among

her husband's congregation as "a blessing, and a sunbeam."

Edward was so glad over the love his wife won, and "she is worthy of it all," he said, as we lingered one twilight on the porch awaiting her return from some kindly errand. "And more too," he added with a happy smile, as her graceful figure appeared at the far end of the village street, and softly he repeated:

"If ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lovely spirit,
Garnished with heavenly gifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at the sight.
There dwell sweet Love and constant Chastity,
Unspotted Faith, and comely Womanhood,
Regard of Honor and mild Modesty."

I have never forgotten Bona's look that hour as she approached swiftly in the clear, soft evening light. Her hair caught a gleam of the level sun; her cheeks were tinted with a sudden glow as she saw her husband, her lips parted as though to utter some word of love; her eyes beamed bright as stars. When she came near enough to link her arm in his, she looked up at him, while the lovely tenderness of her pure,

warm, womanly soul shone in every line of her sweet face as she said :

"God is so good ; and think, He gives us a sure hope of a still better happiness, a still dearer home, when life here on earth is ended. And yet, how can it be dearer or happier ?" she added ; and she turned toward me for a reply. But I did not answer ; I merely said :

"You must ask the minister, your husband ; he is set to be a guide to the people of this parish in all such matters."

The smile with which Bona greeted this reply was like a song without words. And then I entered the house, and left them to their own sweet counsel. How I am straying away from the description of Greenville. Well ! diffuseness is the penalty incurred by asking an old woman to tell the story of a young one.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTER all, as I take up my pen to describe the Greenville of twenty odd years ago, I do not find much to tell. It was a quiet place then, as it is now, but sufficiently near the busy manufacturing town of M—— to permit constant access to the outer world of stirring life and business. But while railroads led in all directions from M——, the different routes diverged before they touched the suburbs of our village, thus its peaceful beauty of woodland and meadow were left undisturbed. The river is the principal feature in the landscape, and it is always suggestive of reflections to a thoughtful mind. It goes singing on its way year after year, as though its only object was to image back the blue sky, floating clouds, and over-hanging tree-boughs. And yet this seemingly quiet river has been, ever since I came to Greenville, a great worker, as was speedily discovered by those who followed for a mile or more the narrow footpath on the bank-

side, for soon they heard the rapid current of the widened stream, and the clatter and roar of machinery. And then one comes in sight of Wolcott Mills, and the long line of irregular houses occupied by the mill-hands and their families. As one looks back from this hamlet toward Greenville they have a full view of the verdant beauty of the range of wooded hills that form the eastern boundary of our village.

At the base of these hills houses are clustered about without any special plan or order, and in the by-gone time, as now, they were the homes of the work-a-day people. Just beyond, on a knoll, or natural terrace, the church had been built by the early settlers in Greenville, and there it remains. And it fills what otherwise might have been left a vacant patch of ground between the eastern and western portions of the town. It has served also from the time of its building as a connecting-link between the different grades of society represented by the homes of the wealthy and "well-to-do" residents, and the humble homes on the side streets. This link, as long as I can remember, has been most graciously emphasized by the fact that the sacred edifice is known

by the old-time title, the "Meeting-house." Before the repairs made a few years ago, the plain wooden building was painted white, and the blank walls seemed all the whiter from contrast with the sombre green of the pine and cedar trees, which grow close on either side of the lane that divides the church from the parsonage garden.

As for the parsonage, it has always been a most cheerful place. When my son and his wife took possession of it, there was hardly an hour in the day in which the sun did not shine on some part or another, for the maples and elms that grew about the house somehow did not interfere with the sunshine, and yet they afforded a pleasant shade, and were not so many but that one could see through them, and while it was a snug and sunny dwelling-place in winter, it was cool and shady in summer, when the glare of the white-painted walls were subdued and toned into harmony by the undulating reflections of the tree-boughs as the wind played lightly among them.

Both the church and the house front toward the east. Bona was quick to observe this.

"I am so glad," she said, and her young

face was aglow with a soft light as she added: "For surely homes that look eastward must have a peculiar brightness. Do you remember it is written, 'The glory of the Lord cometh by the way of the East.'"

We were sitting in the deep porch when Bona said this, and the porch deserves a special description. It was large, with hospitable settles on either side, and the roof projected like a cowl, as though to protect the inmates of the house from the rough east winds of March, as well as to shelter them from the scorching heat of mid-summer. It was a most fragrant place from May on through the season, for it was overhung with honeysuckle, climbing roses, and clematis.

I remember so well Bona's delight in the exterior of her parsonage home, and it in no way abated when she crossed the threshold and sped from room to room. Everywhere she found some fresh cause for satisfaction; from every window she caught some view wonderfully suggestive of good and pleasant thoughts. But, as Edward playfully declared, Bona's discoveries did not prove that other people would see anything remarkable.

"For my wife," he said—and there was a light in his eyes sufficient to make glad the heart of any woman—"has the faculty of seeing something pleasant in every object."

When in our tour of the house we came to the largest and most attractive room, without permitting a word of remonstrance, Bona insisted it must be the "minister's study." This apartment filled the south-east gable; the windows overlooked the garden, and a broad expanse of country which comprised the village and wooded hills that slope down to the shore of the river. That May morning the bay-window was wide open to admit the balmy air, and the spring perfumes, which emanated from the freshly turned up earth of the garden borders, and blended with the delicate fragrance of the early flowers. The rugged knolled trees in the orchard also gave forth sweetness every time the gentle breeze stirred a ripple among the pink and white blossoms, which by the way half hid the tender green of the new-born leafage that always makes one think of a baby's smile and cooing song.

It is wonderful how much a loving woman can accomplish, even in a brief time. Bona

had not been mistress of the parsonage twenty-four hours before her eye took in the minutest detail, while her instinctive good taste taught her the right place for everything, and her deft hands threw a womanly grace over Edward's manly and business-like exactness of arrangement—for my son was business-like in such matters, save in the case of his wife's boudoir, of which you will hear later on.

Bona helped also in the placing of the books on the shelves which filled one side of the study, and she found the best place for the folios, filled with withered specimens of plant and flower which Edward had discovered in his long tramps over the hills. There was a nameless charm in the way she bestowed the more striking articles of ornamentation, so that they might not interfere with the simplicity which marked the room a study. This freedom from display pervaded the entire house, and yet everywhere there was harmony of color, and grace and refinement. Neither was there any part of Bona's domain that was not sacred and hallowed to her by the feeling that it was to be the home of her wifehood, the place into which she was to in-

fuse the true atmosphere of home, by making it a place of peace. She had by nature a quick perception of the qualities of things, their claims and their places. Thus she appreciated the different sphere filled by a man and a woman in domestic life, and she understood without reading Ruskin that "a man's power is action; he is eminently the doer, the provider, the defender, while the woman's power is for rule, sweet ordering, arrangement and decision in the lesser details of home life." At the same time Bona felt strongly that "a woman in any rank of life ought to know what her husband is likely to know, but to know it in a different way. His command of it should be foundational and progressive; hers general and accomplished, for daily and helpful use."

CHAPTER XIV

THE day on which my son and his wife began their home-life was too fine for prolonged indoor work, and after lunch they went out into the sunshine, and on to the orchard, where the grass was strewn with blossoms. The fresh breeze had played riot also among the stately flowers of the "Christmas candles,"—as children call them —of the great horse-chestnut tree at the back of the house, and their perfect beauty was marred. But Edward and Bona were too glad of heart to notice; their eyes were only open to behold the sunshine and the brightness of the spring day. They walked hand in hand across the blossom-carpeted grass like children, and children I called them. But my son remonstrated, and reminded me they were staid married people, which assertion Bona questioned, as she smiled in her sunny way, and asked: "What are we but children?"

"Children for whom
The songs are written, but if we will not learn

We shall not read them when the right time comes.
Or read them wrongly and confusedly;"

and

"Each hour has its lesson and each life—"

"Oh, Edward," she exclaimed, after a brief pause, "are the after lines of the poem true?" and she repeated the words:

"If we miss one life we shall not find
Its lesson in another; rather go
So much the less complete forevermore,
Still missing something that we cannot name.
Still with our senses so far unattuned
To what the Present brings to harmonize
With our soul's Past."

Again a pause followed, and then again Bona asked, "Are the lines true?"

"It certainly is true," Edward answered, "that a man holds the past only as he seizes the present, and through that the future."

They were too far away for me to hear what more Bona said, although I still caught the echo of her voice and silvery laugh. At last even that grew faint and distant, and I had no means of knowing how long her sweet chattering continued, but I do not doubt all through the afternoon, for love talked and love listened, and love such as theirs does not know the meaning of weari-

ness. No wonder the village people, as they noted the happiness of my son and his wife, fell into the habit of calling the parsonage home "The Dovecot." And yet there were those among Edward's parishioners who, when they first saw Bona's girlish figure and smiling face, shook their heads ominously, as they said in subdued tones that their pastor's wife was hardly as serious as a minister's wife should be.

But there were others, and among them myself, her mother-in-law, and her husband, the minister, who had no fear on that score. Full well we discerned amid all the joy of her heart, Bona possessed also a brave, earnest, true soul. We knew the subduing of the present care-free, joyous manner would come in due time, and in immediate response to the first "needs be." God grant that may not come for many a long year, I said to myself, as I sat on the garden seat and watched her receding figure. And somehow I felt sure it would be long, as I thought of the expression on Bona's uplifted face an hour before, when, seeing Edward at the study window, she had asked him to come and take her for a walk away off, up to the summit of the hill. She en-

forced the request with the plea, "It is such a jewel of a day." "And all days are jewels to my little wife," Edward had replied.

Still, though I remembered Edward's words, I sat for many minutes, pondering over the cause of the grave looks of those men and women, among my son's congregation, who questioned his wisdom. Why do they want Bona to be otherwise than blithe, I wondered, when she has such a goodly heritage for time and for eternity, and when naturally, youth loves happiness and brightness, as indeed it should, for joy belongs to the sunrise and morning of life. Yes, certainly, it is the time appointed by God for lightness of heart and sweet innocent joy, and if these glad emotions are not experienced in youth, alas when will they be?

To shed joy around as Bona did, "to radiate happiness, to cast light upon dark days, to be the golden thread of destiny to more than one, and the very spirit of grace and harmony, surely this is to render a blessed service in this sad world."

CHAPTER XV

THUS far I have given my own impressions of my son's wife. It is time, however, to give certain extracts from her diary, which tell what she thought of her husband's parishioners, and of myself, his mother. This latter pen-portrait is highly commendatory, for Bona has always inclined to over-estimate my good qualities. The truth is, she had, even in her young days, the faculty of seeing the good in every one. I realized this soon after her marriage when I happened to hear a conversation she had with Edward on the subject.

He had come in tired and discouraged from a round of pastoral visits, and inclined to question the sincerity of some of the leading members of his church. In reply to his fault-finding, Bona pleaded:

"Surely it was only the surface he had touched. In the depth of their hearts," she said, "there is much that is truly earnest and good. It is only their opinion they cling to with obstinate persistence; surely

they feel the existence of a truth beyond the half-truth to which they cling."

As Bona ceased speaking Edward shook his head doubtfully, and for a moment the expression of his face was stern, but as he looked at Bona's bright eyes, and met her hopeful smile, the gloom passed from his countenance, and the hardness from his heart, as swiftly as a snowflake melts when the sun shines on it.

And a few minutes afterward, he drew her to him, and bent his head and kissed her, and said :

"Yes, dear, you are right ; there is good to be found in every one," and gravely he added : "'Certainly we should be slow to think that man at his worst is the real man, and certainly the better we are, the less likely he is to be at his worst in our company.'"

And now, without further delay, I will copy the extracts I promised from Bona's journal. The date is soon after her arrival at Greenville, and she wrote :

"Among my wedding gifts there is a blank book, many paged, and bound substantially in blue leather. Evidently it is meant for a daily record, and on the fly-

leaf I find traced—as though to remind me of the true object of life—the lines

> 'They serve God well
> Who serve His creatures.'

As I read the words to-night, I decided to take them for a motto for the ordering of my life at home, and in my husband's parish. I decided also to act on the idea suggested by the blank pages, and every day I will strive to gather some fragment worth recording. And then, when the time of old age comes, perchance I may turn the leaves and read of the happy present. Perhaps, too, I may record something in my own experience that will help others to avoid the places where I have stumbled. For I suppose I will find rough, difficult places in life, although now the future looks so bright, beautiful, and satisfying; and my by-gone years, too, were all so happy. And yet *that* gladness seems as pale and shadowy as moonlight, when contrasted with the sunshine of the present.

"Why Edward chose me for his wife is, and ever will be, a mystery; and no one can wonder at it more than I do. For truly

I am an insignificant little woman, but when I say so to my husband he only laughs and tells me he is satisfied, and that he is able to judge, for it is love's privilege to see the best in the beloved one. And yet, as I remind Edward, the old proverb asserts that 'love is blind,' but, indeed, I do not think so.

"This is not at all as I meant to begin my diary. I sat down to record my first impression of my husband's mother, and of the people I have met. I understand since seeing Mrs. Morgan—or mother, as I like better to call her—how much her influence has helped to make my husband the good, true man he is. She is a woman of such uncommon spirit, with a mind that draws others to it as the loadstone draws the needle, and yet she is most unassuming in manner. In appearance she is attractive; her blue eyes are as clear as though they had never been dimmed by tears. She dresses simply in mourning, and the snow-white cap and bands of white at her neck and wrists denote her widowhood. There are silver threads, too, in the abundant hair, brushed smoothly back from her wide forehead, which tell that life has had its sorrow.

"Edward has told me of his mother's great grief, but I will not dwell on the details. This sorrow is not exhibited in her life; for while one cannot see her without knowing that she has never forgotten, yet she has kept an undertone brightness of spirit, and one straightway feels that even at the darkest hour of trial she has trusted our Heavenly Father, and that she prays much and often, and that in answer to her prayer God has granted her the blessed knowledge that

> 'Over all our tears His rainbow bends,
> To all our cries a pitying ear He lends.'

This knowledge and the peace which blossomed out of it were the gifts that came to my husband's mother hand in hand with sorrow, and that peace has never failed her, Edward says. Indeed how could it when the promise is, 'Now abideth faith, hope, and love,' for that means faith to uphold, hope to illumine, and love to consecrate our tears. No wonder with such a trust she found courage to take up life and its duties, not in her own strength—oh, no, not in her own, but by the 'strength made perfect in weakness.'

"It is beautiful to observe how her husband's influence still lives as an incentive power in the home from which his earthly presence went so long ago. It makes it so true that 'our dead are never dead to us until we forget them.'

"Being a woman I understand even better than Edward can his mother's unselfishness in not making her home with us, and I think she knows that I appreciate it, and this has drawn our hearts together. Then, too, our love for and admiration of Edward's character is a great bond of sympathy, especially as Mrs. Morgan's heart is, I am sure, as free from jealousy as a field of newly-fallen snow is free from stain or footmark."

Yes, my son's wife was right in that last assertion, however much she may have been mistaken in her other statements regarding me, for from the hour I heard of Edward's engagement to Bona Dunbar I rejoiced in his happy love, and from the day he brought his bride home I thought her worthy of his devotion, and truly I thought he too was worthy of her. At the same time I will not conceal the fact that my clergyman son in his young days was in certain ways rather a faulty

person. He was often a little over-sensitive, and inclined to be irritable when tired from mental strain. He was quick to take offence also, and to be sometimes unreasonable, and like many intellectually impatient people, it was not always easy for him to remember the rules of social courtesy, which forbid us to say things, however true, which may give pain to others. But his temper, like a summer storm, was over in a minute, and he was tender and sweet in manner, especially so toward women and children, as strong men with good hearts are wont to be.

I saw from the first that Bona was the wife to make smooth life's rough places for such a temperament, and that her influence would tend to make Edward more generous toward the opinions of others. She held so firmly to the conviction that others have as good a right to their opinions as we have to ours. And as she often said :

"No one can make true things false, or false things true, by choosing to think them so. The eternal truths and rights of things exist independent of thoughts and wishes. You can no more make a social regulation work well which is not just, than you can make water run up hill."

CHAPTER XVI

IN Bona's diary I find the following account of her introduction to Mrs. Tom Wolcott, and Dr. Lee's wife:

"Toward the end of the day Edward and I walked over to Northfield hill to call on Widow Blake, who lives in the red farmhouse, which has a sloping roof, with a great chimney in the middle.

"Our path led through a forest of ancient pine trees that extended from the river bank to the ridge of the hill, which is crowned with a thick growth of birches, poplars, and maples. The young foliage clothed the branches of the poplars and birches with a most delicate green, while soft tints of red covered the maples. It was pleasant also, to hear the note of the linnet-thrush, and the clear song of the robin.

"In fact, the wood was full of birds, although they were so busy with straws, fluff, and nest-building, that they paid no heed to our footsteps; yet they found time to sing and chirp. From early morning it had been

one of those days wonderful to experience, and exhilarating beyond expression. Simply to breathe has been a pleasure, and when we reached the hill-top a thrill of life seemed to tremble in the air. Spring wooing summer was present everywhere.

"As we turned homeward the sunlight lay gently on the tree-tops, and shone in shimmering rays through the opening vistas of the woods. It was so quiet, that long before either horse or rider came in sight, we could distinctly hear the sound of the steady thud of hoofs treading on the dry leaves of last year's fall.

"When at last the equestrians appeared at the entrance of a bridle-path that led to the high-road, they proved to be Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wolcott. And from the moment I caught my first glimpse of Dora Wolcott, she became the central object of the scene to me. Tom was mounted, Edward told me, on his father's favorite cob, while Dora rode the white mare—Lady Blanch, the pride of the Wolcott stable. Dora appeared to such advantage on horseback. Edward said my eyes sparkled with admiration as I looked at her. Be that as it may, I straightway felt a singular sense of warm interest in Dora

Wolcott, combined with a feeling that while we were very unlike, we would nevertheless understand one another. I wonder, will we? In manner she is reserved, but somehow we have the faculty of drawing each other out, and after a few minutes we were talking like old friends rather than new acquaintances. Of course my husband and Tom Wolcott had no end of subjects to discuss, and I think we were all sorry when, as we came to the place where the roads meet, Dr. Lee's gig emerged from a cloud of dust."

I put Bona's diary aside just here to give my own version of the conversation of the three brides—for I happened to join the young folk just then, as I was on my way home from M——. Yes, I must describe that interview. Bona's pen, though graphic, has never been sharp enough to portray either Nan Lee or Tom Wolcott those days. In truth, my son's wife always writes with a pen gentle as a feather plucked from a dove's wing.

Jack Lee was driving Nan in old Dr. Gray's high gig, an equipage that certainly seemed most unsuitable for the daintily dressed little lady. The ease with which

Nan immediately took the lead in the conversation was quite remarkable.

No sooner had her husband reined in his spirited horse, and introduced Nan to Mrs. Wolcott and Bona, than she began an amusing account of what she termed the woes of a honeymoon when one's husband was a country physician.

"Just think!" she said, "all the morning I was left to entertain myself, save at intervals, when I caught sight of my husband, and even then his talk was all of duty here and duty there, and I hate duty," she continued, with a glance toward Edward, as though to challenge him as a minister to reprove the assertion. But he paid no heed to either words or glance, and Nan repeated, with a slight toss of her pretty head: "Yes, I hate doing things because I must. Duty means effort and a fight with disinclination, and who ever heard of a fighting bride? No, I will have nothing whatever to do with duty!"

"How do you propose to escape its demands, Mrs. Lee?" asked Dora Wolcott in a cold, critical voice.

Not waiting for Nan to reply, she leaned forward and looked down at Bona, who stood

with easy grace resting one hand on the side of my low phaeton. As Dora looked at her the cold, haughty expression of her face softened, and I knew she appreciated Bona's unconsciousness of the fact that she was standing in the dusty road, while the other ladies of the party were seated in comfortable ease. Bona's face was half hidden by the broad straw hat she wore tied under her chin, gypsy-fashion; but though partly concealed, one knew it was a happy face, as indeed it proved, when in reply to something I said she looked up, and answered in a voice that involuntarily was set to the tune of love; for the love songs that made music in Bona's heart had not become any the less frequent since she had attained to the dignity of a minister's wife. And yet it was a position she regarded with great earnestness and a sacred sense of responsibility.

Perhaps that was why she took no part in the conversation between Dora and Nan. Dora resumed it, however, saying: "One must fight, I suppose, if they expect to win victories." Her dark eyes glowed as she spoke, and truly victory seemed a word that belonged to the stately young woman, and yet that very hour she was confronted by defeat!

CHAPTER XVII

DORA and Nan continued to talk on indifferent subjects for some time, until at last, with an air of playful petulance that succeeded in attracting the attention of her husband and Tom Wolcott, Nan exclaimed :

"A country village like this remote corner of the world so shuts one in and limits life to such a narrow sphere, really the future looks so dull I dread to encounter it."

At these words Bona spoke in her quiet, bright way.

"Why do you try to anticipate the future?" she said. "Why not leave it to take care of itself; the present is so full for us, novices as we are in housekeeping, and making home happy and comfortable for our husband"; and she smiled and looked up in her husband's face, and then in her clear, bird-like voice, that seemed to give the smile sound, she repeated the lines :

> "Act, act in the living present,
> Heart within and God o'erhead."

"Oh, yes, plenty of heart," Nan respond-

ed in a light, half-mocking tone, and she glanced at Bona with an expression that caused the color to deepen in my daughter-in-law's already rosy cheeks, for, as I have said, Bona was not without temper.

There was no time for reply; at that very moment Jack declared that he had a medical visit that must be made immediately, and with a hasty farewell he touched his restive horse lightly with the whip, and in a second he and Nan were speeding away toward M——.

"What a relief!" Dora exclaimed; "and what a very disagreeable young woman. Yes, I dislike her extremely," she continued, despite Tom's remonstrance, and Bona's assurance that Mrs. Lee was half in jest in all she said.

And then occurred one of those "slight things that make epochs in married life." It was only a hasty speech on Tom's part, and a sudden pang of jealousy in Dora's heart. It was a mere nothing, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but, alas! such clouds grow until sometimes the entire sky is overcast.

"All things must be excused Mrs. Lee for the sake of her pretty face"; this was what

Tom said, and he added with a playful glance at his wife's shadowed face: "Did any one ever behold a more beautiful woman?"

But, alas! Dora had no perception of playfulness. Tom did wrong in not remembering this fact. He was unwise, too, to press the matter when he saw that Dora resented the praise he bestowed on another woman, and yet, from a boyish love of teasing in his indolent, careless way, he repeated the idle words with increased fervor, and without seeming to observe the flush of anger that shone in Dora's dark eyes.

As I afterward learned, this was the first approach to open disagreement that had come between Tom and Dora Wolcott. Even before I knew this, I felt sure, that although Dora looked so proud and cold, Tom's words had caused a sudden sinking in her heart, for like most reserved people she was keenly sensitive when she loved, and Dora Wolcott did love her husband.

Bona meanwhile had listened to Tom in silence while a look of pain came into her tell-tale face. And as Tom and Dora rode away a few minutes later she slipped her hand into Edward's as she said:

"Why did he vex and wound her?"

Although Edward's reply was a caress, I knew the unclouded pleasure of the afternoon had been shadowed for Bona; I knew her quick, ready sympathy had been deeply stirred, and that she would not forget the look of mingled pain and anger on Dora Wolcott's face; I knew it would stay with her as she walked home in the sweet twilight of that May day; I knew it would not be silenced; and though the soft air floated like a whisper of peace over the green fields, she would still hear the sigh of Dora's unrest.

CHAPTER XVIII

SUNDAY was always a most blessed day to my son's wife. As she sat by my side in "the minister's pew" with her gaze uplifted toward Edward, her eyes were wont to shine with the clear, steady light that is only reflected from a hea.t full of earnest aspirations. There was, too, a calmness about her brow, that, had the rest of her face been hidden, would have set a seal to the truth that she was one of the pure in heart who see the Lord.

To Dora Wolcott, Bona's devout spirit, earnest faith, and her love for all the ordinances of the church were a wonderment and a new phase in experience, for Dora had grown up in a home where religion filled a secondary place.

"What do people go to church for?" she asked one mid-summer Saturday, as she and Tom joined Bona in the garden, whither she had gone to gather the flowers that every Sunday she carried over to the church, to fill the tall vases on either side of the

pulpit, and the great basket on the table in the vestibule.

Tom answered Dora's question, saying:

"Why, to hear the sermon, which is always sure to be good when Mrs. Morgan's husband is the preacher. Isn't it?" he added with a low laugh, as Bona looked at him with a smile that was sweeter because of the serious earnestness of her manner, as she said:

"And what do you go to hear the sermon for, Mr. Wolcott?"

Tom was not fond of a personal application, and in an indolent, indifferent voice he replied:

"Doubtless some people go to be entertained, and some to be taught, but for that matter, except when Rev. Edward Morgan holds forth, nine people out of ten know just as well as the preacher what is right and what is wrong."

"Yes," interrupted Dora, "and in these days of cheap printing and ever-multiplying books, papers, and magazines, one can have plenty of devotional reading at home. Perhaps they go to pray," she added carelessly, as though to dismiss the subject.

"But they need not do that," Bona said

gently, "for they could pray at home. God is everywhere; we can speak to Him as well here in the garden as in church."

"Well, then, why do we go to church?" Tom retaliated.

"I think it is because we ought to," Bona said.

"Why, Bona!" exclaimed Dora, "had any one but you said that I would call it a silly answer."

"It seems to me a very reverent and true one, however," and it was Edward, the minister himself, who spoke.

He had been standing at the open window in the study all the time, and had heard every word of the conversation; but only Tom and myself had been aware of his presence.

"Oh! are you there, Mr. Morgan?" Dora said; and with more of interest than she is wont to show, she asked: "Pray, tell us why you call it a reverent answer?"

"Why," Edward said, "'because a man comes to church for reasons which he cannot explain to himself, and just so, many of the deepest and best feelings of our hearts are those which we cannot explain to ourselves, though we believe in them,

would fight for them, die for them if needs be. And the man or woman who frankly confesses that he or she does not quite know why they come to church, is most likely to know at last why they do come; most likely to understand the answer which Scripture gives to the question.'"

"What answer is that?" said Tom.

"Strange to say," Edward replied, "it is one which people nowadays, with the Bible in their hands, have almost forgotten, for we go to church, according to the Bible, to worship God."

As Edward ceased speaking, Bona pleaded: "Oh, Edward, do please read us Charles Kingsley's definition of worship."

Taking the book from the study-table Edward read: "To worship—think awhile what that ancient and deep and noble word signifies. So ancient is it that man learnt to worship even before he learnt to till the ground. So deep that even to this day no man altogether understands what worship means. So noble that the noblest souls on earth delight most in worshipping. . . . . To worship! That power of worship, that longing to worship, that instinct that it is his duty to worship something, is, if you

will receive it, the true distinction between man and brutes. Philosophers have tried to define man as this sort of animal and that sort of animal. The only sound definition is this: man is the one animal who worships, and he worships just because he is, not merely an animal, but a man, with an immortal soul within him."

Just at this point Edward was interrupted, and perhaps it was well.

Evidently Tom Wolcott was a good deal moved by the passage, though according to his habit, he assumed indifference as he turned to Bona, saying:

"Now that the minister of the parish has told us why we ought to attend church, I appeal to the minister's wife for an explanation of her object in introducing flowers into our meeting-house"; and Tom laughed lightly as he drew a garden-chair in front of the rustic table before which Bona sat arranging the flowers for church.

I confess I listened to Bona's reply with much interest. The truth is, I had felt somewhat apprehensive as to how this modern custom would be received in an old-fashioned place like Greenville, where the Puritan element still dominated.

I had not expressed my fear; nevertheless Bona's quick instinct had caught a hint of it, and as Dora emphasized Tom's question, saying, "Oh, yes, do tell us your object," Bona looked toward me, as with a bright smile she repeated the lines:

"Bring flowers to the shrine where we kneel in prayer;
They are nature's offering, their place is there!
They speak of hope to the fainting heart,
With a voice of promise they come and part;
They sleep in dust through the wintry hours,
They break forth in glory. Bring flowers, bright flowers."

As Bona concluded, Tom said:

"Those are pretty lines, Mrs. Morgan, but they do not sufficiently express your motive to satisfy me."

Bona was not in the least embarrassed by a certain coldness in Tom's tone. She answered without hesitation:

"I have several motives, Mr. Wolcott, but chief among them ranks the fact that flowers are so full of analogies freighted with Gospel truth; they teach such tender lessons of humility and the trust our Lord inculcated when He bade His disciples con-

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sider the lilies, and when He taught them by that least of all flowers, the mustard-seed. A flower is such a wonderful thing," she added softly

"Yes," Tom replied, and because flowers always appealed to him, there was an unwonted earnestness in his voice as he said, "you remind me of the familiar verse so dear to all lovers of Tennyson :

"'Flower in the crannied wall, I pluck you out of the crannies ;
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand ;
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, all in all,
I should know what God and man is.'"

This is only part of the talk Tom Wolcott had with my son's wife regarding flowers, but I pass the remainder by in silence, because I want to record a conversation I had soon afterward with Joe, the church sexton, for it entirely quieted any doubt I had felt about the wisdom of Bona's introduction of flowers into our place of worship.

CHAPTER XIX

BONA had met with decided opposition on Joe's part, when the Sunday after her arrival in Greenville, she had entered the church an hour before the ringing of the first bell, with a basket of May flowers in one hand and a great branch of blossoming dogwood in the other. Not that Joe had said much; on the contrary, then, and for several Sundays, he expressed his disapproval more by looks than words. But there came a Sabbath when the June roses were in their full beauty and fragrance, when his silence gave place to utterance, and that was the day when, as he expressed it, he became a convert to Mrs. Morgan's way of thinking about flowers and most other matters; and now I will tell the tale in Joe's own words.

"I was standing," he said, "in the vestibule when the minister's wife came tripping up the steps, lookin' like a flower herself, and carrying a basket full to overflowing with June roses and white lilies. 'Excuse

me, ma'am,' says I, speaking a bit sharp, 'but it appears like to me, and some other folks, that this bringing of flowers along into our meeting-house is mighty like the doings of the idolatrous nations, and all out of order for Greenville. We stick to the ways of our forebears here. What was good enough for them is good enough for us, and that's the general opinion of the congregation.'

"Now, would you believe it," Joe continued, "she looked at me just as bright and smiling as if I had said a pleasant good-morning rather than a fault-findin'.

"'Yes, Joseph,' she answered, 'it is true flowers have been used for decoration of temple and altar by many idolatrous nations, but *only* for decoration, while I gather and place them in our church for something more.'

"'And what may that more be, ma'am?' says I, speaking sharp like.

"Her voice was sweet as the voice of a cooing dove, as in reply she told me of God's love in clothing the earth with beauty. She spoke of Eden and the flowers that had no thorns till sin entered that first garden, and then she told of the heavenly garden

where the flowers never fade, because sin cannot enter there.

"From that description," Joe continued, "she passed on to speak of the resurrection, and how every spring the up-coming of the flowers from their winter sleep in the cold ground is like a beautiful hope proclaiming the blessed truth, that what we call death is the pathway to life."

At this part of his story Joe brushed away with his rough coat-sleeve a sudden mist of tears from before his eyes, and his voice—usually so harsh—was gentle as a woman's when he said:

"Listening to her I seemed all of a sudden like, to live over the time when my wife Mary Ann and our little one was took off by fever, both in one week. And just as I was a-thinkin' how they drooped and died, the wind that come in through the open window along by the side of the pulpit, blew in strong a breath of the perfume of the roses blooming in the parsonage garden, and a-standin' there by young Mrs. Morgan a-lookin' at the flowers she had brought, I seemed to know, as I never had before, the truth of what she said about the flowers not being lost, though they were

hid out of sight during the winter, just as my wife Mary Ann and the young one ain't lost, though they be hid from me, I'll see 'em again in heaven's spring-time."

After a few minutes' silence, during which he regained his composure, Joe went on to tell that this was not the only work the June roses did that Sunday morning.

"Widow Blake," he said, "she who lives up to Northfield Hill, came back into the meeting-house after the second service, and says she, 'Mr. Prindle, would ye be willin' to give me one of them June roses?'

"'Why, yes, ma'am,' says I, 'a dozen if ye like 'em; they be Mrs. Morgan's, but I reckon she don't set no value by 'em.'

"There was a kinder softish look on the widow's face as she asked for the rose, that led me to say: 'May I be so bold as to ask why you want them roses, Mrs. Blake? ain't ye got plenty in yer own front yard?'

"'Yes,'" says she, 'but ye see, though I be strong of body, Mr. Prindle, my mind ain't trained to listen steady like, and during the minister's sermon, which was powerful fine doctrine, before ever I knowed where my thoughts was a-turning, I found myself a-counting over and over the sum

due next quarter day on the mortgage on my five-acre lot, the best bit of pasture on my farm. And, thinks I, how ever will I pay that interest? And the thought was mighty depressing. And then I gave myself a little shake, as it were, and I set up straight as a pin, and tried to listen to what the minister was a-sayin'. But I couldn't fix my mind nohow. I felt like a regular backslider sitting there in the Lord's house, and a-letting my thoughts wander off to earthly matters. Just that minute my eye fell on them roses along by the side of the pulpit, and all of a sudden they seemed a-lookin' at me, and I seemed to hear a hundred voices—soft, like the way the minister's wife speaks—a-whispering: "Widder Blake, Widder Blake, take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow will take thought for itself." And, somehow, them flowers did not stop a-preachin' with them words, for again I seemed to hear, plain as plain could be, the whisper, "Trust in God, Widder Blake; if He provides for us flowers, surely He'll take care of you, His child." ' "

I need hardly add that Joe concluded his recital by the assurance, that in view of his own and the widow's experience, he had

decided the custom of placing flowers in the meeting-house was a good one, after all, and he added, "I reckon there'll be no more complaints of that, or any other of our minister's wife's doings." But being of a practical turn of mind, Joe also added:

"It's my opinion the Widow Blake was a sort of dozing when she heard them whispers, but that makes no difference, so long as she learned a lesson of trust and hope from them roses, and there's other folks in our congregation that needs,—as much as the Widow Blake, and me,—the lessons flowers teach. I reckon it's the knowin' this, that keeps young Mrs. Morgan so faithful in a-filling them baskets and vases, for be the day sunshiny or cloudy, she never neglects a-doing it."

CHAPTER XX

WRITING as I am for Bona's daughter, I do not fear her finding still another record of her mother's flower-mission wearisome. Hence I will tell of a sweet, although sad experience, which occurred the very week after Joe told me his story.

Every Sunday Edward held a late afternoon service in the school-house, on the outskirts of Milltown; and Bona was wont to accompany him, taking with her the freshest of the flowers that had already fulfilled their Sunday work in the village church. It was her custom, when the simple service at the school-house ended, to give the sweet things to the women and children, who were as eager to receive them as if they had been costly treasures.

The special day of which I tell, Bona's basket had been emptied, except for a half-open white rose, which she was just about giving to a blue-eyed baby girl, when her attention was attracted by a woman, evidently

young in years, but old in sorrow, and that which is sadder than sorrow—sin. This woman did not stretch out her hand or ask for a flower, as her companions had, and yet in her eyes there was such a look of longing, as they rested on the white rose, it said more than words. Still, when Bona held it toward her, she did not take it: she bowed her head and turned away, murmuring:

"No, it ain't for me; a white rose 's never meant for the like of me!"

"Yes, it is for you," Bona said.

At the sound of her tender voice the girl paused to listen; still she did not take the flower, not even when Bona repeated: "The good God made it for you, and for no one else."

"It appears as though there must be some mistake in what you say," the girl answered. "I'm Sue—Wild Sue, the mill folks call me."

Without seeming to heed the words, and not asking why she was called "Wild Sue," Bona with her own soft, delicate hands and dainty touch, fastened the rose in the belt of Sue's soiled woolen frock; and then in the simplest words, my son's wife told the

story so old, and yet always laden with new life for those who listen and believe. As she told of God's pity for even the most sinful, and of Christ's love, so full of compassion and pardon for the penitent, Wild Sue listened, as the hungry listen to a tale of food, enough, and to spare, and to be had merely for the asking; or as the thirsty hearken to the story of a well of water upspringing in a dry and thirsty land.

As she ended, again Bona pointed to the rose that was beginning to droop, and once more she told of the Christ who will not break the bruised reed, and how, because of His love, a soul stained with sin, deep dyed as crimson, could yet become white as snow—white as the stainless rose.

And so infinite is God's mercy, as Sue listened and looked at the rose, the truth of Christ's love and forgiveness became so real to her sorrow-bowed, sin-tempted soul, that she found it easy to believe that there was indeed mercy, help, and pardon even for her.

Bona and Sue were alone during this talk, save for Edward's presence, and it was Edward who told me of it.

When at last Bona said good-bye to the

girl, she also said that she would come on the morrow and bring more roses and a cluster of lilies from her own garden for her new friend. Yes, my son's wife called that outcast girl her friend. She was so glad afterward. And then Bona, with her husband by her side, had returned through the sweet golden hush of the summer twilight, to her own love-warm home, a place so unlike the desolate upper room in the cheerless tenement-house just round the corner from Wolcott Mills, where Sue sought shelter for the night.

The next morning, soon after sunrise, Bona, and many others in Greenville, were awakened from sleep by the slow tolling of the church bell. Bona had lived long enough in Greenville to know the meaning of the sound, and that in our village the ancient custom was still retained of thus proclaiming the departure of a soul from earth to—where?

Twenty-one times that bell tolled, twenty-one years of mortal life it recorded! Who it was that had gone neither Edward nor Bona knew until after breakfast, when Joe, the sexton, came to tell "the minister."

I met Joe at the parsonage gate, and he

greeted me with the words: "Wild Sue—Nugent's girl—to whom our minister's wife gave a white rose yesterday—was took off sudden in the night. It was a case of heart failure, Dr. Lee says, but lawks, ma'am," Joe added, "all death is from that cause so far as I know. Want of breath, it's the end of all on us"; and Joe turned away, leaving me to carry the tidings to the inmates of the parsonage. But before I reached the doorstep he was by my side again, saying:

"I omitted to mention that Dr. Lee was particular to say I was to tell young Mrs. Morgan that Sue went to sleep a-holdin' that white rose in her hand—and it's there now!"

Two hours later I accompanied my son's wife to the dreary room from whence such a little while before a soul had gone out into the mystery and the silence—out, surely we may trust, from the darkness into the Light.

As we beheld the faded rose in that cold, motionless hand, Bona softly repeated the words the repentant girl had uttered only the day before: "Looking at the rose, and hearing you tell of Him who loves sinners,

it seems easy to believe"; and clasping my hand close, she whispered:

"Surely those words are an assurance that poor Sue did believe, and believing heard the heavenly command, 'Go, and sin no more.'"

On our return home, when Bona told Edward where we had been, she said in a voice that was more like an assertion than a question:

"I wonder, was it because the pitying Christ, who pardoned Sue, knew her weakness that He took her in the hour of repentance away from temptation; took her Home where there is no more sorrow, nor sin, and where 'the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling'?" A moment later Bona murmured half as though speaking to herself: "It is written, 'God is faithful, He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape';" and softly she added, "Poor Sue had so little power to resist, she was so weak!"

Later in the day again I went with Bona and Edward to the desolate room. It was very still; there was no sound, save the rustle of the leaves on the great maple-tree

outside the open window, and Edward's voice as he prayed to our Father and her Father—the God of pity and of love. And then the motionless form was carried from that dreary house to a new-made grave.

It was a quiet, peaceful place where we left her. And God's dear Heaven was above; and the faded rose, so pure and stainless, was lying on her breast; and on the grave Bona placed a cluster of the white lilies that are called "Virgin's Tears."

CHAPTER XXI

"IT is a clumsy way we have of dividing time by the revolutions of the clock into minutes and hours, days and years, as if each portion so measured were of the same size as another of equal length. This may suit well enough for the common ends of life, but there are finer measurements for which it is quite misleading. The real size of any space of time is to be measured by the amount it contains of the soul's experience. No one hour is exactly like another, and there are single hours which are longer than months." Certainly these words are true in respect to Dora Wolcott's intercourse with my son's wife, for to Dora it was like the opening of a door leading into a life richer and fuller of new thoughts and aims than she had ever dreamed of before. Hence one hour spent with Bona was equal to half a dozen ordinary hours.

It was wonderful the amount of influence a quiet little woman like Bona exerted. No one realized this as fully as her husband; he

often said to me, he always felt that she was so loving, earnest, and sincere, that it behooved him to be more careful; and other people were affected in the same way.

They instinctively felt that she was a very rare person, and in her company they became nobler and truer. It was thus her goodness manifested itself. And yet she never assumed either by word, look, or manner the place of oracle. It never occurred to her to lay down rules as to how this or that was to be done, or to assert "your wrong by her right." Oh, no, that was not Bona's way.

One of the sweetest things about her influence has always been her entire simplicity and unconsciousness of self. We who knew her daily life understood the secret of that influence. We knew that it was due to her habit of setting apart certain times for prayer and communion with God and her own soul, and keeping to them as much as possible. After these times of communion she never failed to resume her place in the family or social circle with perfect ease. There has never been anything like dropping stitches in life's pattern and taking them up again. Prayer, praise, and

practice have from the days of her youth made part of the seamless robe of her life's pattern. "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." I many a time say those words to myself when I think of my son's wife.

Another great secret of her success consisted in the fact that she was willing to leave all results with God. She was not always digging up seeds to see how they grew, and she was willing to sow seed for others to reap provided the reaping were well done. Yes, she trusted her work to God and therefore He blessed it.

In spite of all this there were in the early years of her life in Greenville certain people, who, when Bona was called charming, asked what you meant, and no one asked this as often as Nan Lee. Bona's unconscious power of pleasing and ennobling people was also a favorite topic with Dora Wolcott.

"I cannot understand it," she said, as we met on the parsonage doorstep toward the close of a mid-summer day.

"But I can," interrupted Tom; "the simple explanation is 'her thinking of others, makes you think of her.' She is like a revolv-

ing lamp set in a light-house tower; whatever the subject discussed, she sheds a ray of light on it, and yet she does it so gently and unassumingly one is no more conscious of it than a flower is conscious of sunshine."

In proof of this Tom bade us observe during that one evening the number of subjects Bona would suggest. At that very moment she came around the southwest corner of the house, singing as she came, for Bona's songs had not ended with her honeymoon. True love songs never do, although the harmony changes as the years come and go. And then Edward joined us, and he bade us hasten to the garden-seat, under the horse-chestnut tree, from which there was a wide-open view of the western sky, which was ablaze with golden, orange, and crimson-tinted clouds that mingled and melted one into the other, just where the sun sank behind the distant hills, as though to form a gateway through which the day slowly withdrew. Meanwhile the river repeated the story of the sky.

Even Dora, who was never keenly sensitive to the beauty of nature, was impressed by the scene, and with a softened tenderness of voice unusual with her, she said:

"If it only would not change so quickly."

True enough it did change quickly. Almost as she spoke the air became filled with a silvery mist, which clothed the hills with mystery and made the nearer landscape dreamy.

"That is why I do not enjoy nature," Dora continued; "it is always changing, and I like permanency."

Edward sighed at Dora's words. He, too, was a lover of the permanent.

"Yes," he said, "it is true nature suggests constant change. Spring seems scarcely sure of its reign before summer pushes it aside. Already the spring flowers have gone to seed, and in the meadows marsh-marigolds, that were so abundant a week ago, are beginning to fade. Already the golden-rod is in bloom, and soon it too will begin to fade and 'the fading of the wild flowers always seems the first sorrow of the year.'"

"But,"—and it was Bona who uttered that 'but,'—"the rhythm of the universe demands just this coming and going, rising and falling. Without reaction there would be no action; 'without death we would not know what life meant,' and if the flowers

did not fade the fruit would not ripen, and fruit is the object of life."

"Now, Bona, do not begin to preach," Dora said, with an affectionate glance at Bona's up-looking face. "We all know if the winter—which stands as a type of sorrow—is tempered by suggestions of the renewal of life, the spring is bounded with many a reminder of the coming of death. And so it will be until the end of time; life and death will continue like the swinging of a pendulum."

As she ceased speaking Dora sighed, even more heavily than Edward had a few minutes before.

"No, I will not preach," Bona replied, with a bright smile, which included each member of the little group; and she linked her arm in Dora's as she led the way to the open door, and begged us all to come into the house and taste her sponge-cake. It was Bona's custom to thus invite any friend who called toward twilight to join Edward and herself at their simple evening meal.

CHAPTER XXII

WHEN we entered the cheerful library we found Edward was right in saying the seasons stole a march one on the other. For even then, in late August, there was enough chill in the evening air to make pleasant the fire of drift-wood, that cast a ruddy glow over the furniture and sombre tinting of the walls and hangings. The room was enlivened also by candles, which burned under rose-colored shades, and a rose-shaded lamp stood on the table, which was laden with books, in what Edward called "my wife's orderly disorder." The air was fragrant with the delicate perfume—that is like the echo of an odor—which exhaled from the star-like white blossoms of wild clematis—or "traveller's joy," as the country folk call it—which filled a great china bowl.

"Where did you find it?" Tom asked in his half-teasing way. "Why did you not leave it happy in its woodland home, with the birds and the bees for companions?"

Bona's reply was prevented by the entrance of Dr. and Mrs. Lee. Nan had never looked prettier. She had excellent taste in dress, and her graceful figure and fair beauty afforded the widest range of choice in the color and texture of her drapery. She had recently read of the modern custom of naming the rooms in one's house for different flowers, and decorating them accordingly, and she had determined to apply the idea to her own costume. Hence she appeared, as suitable to the season, in the garb of a purple aster. It proved a flower that readily lent itself to her skill in adaptation. She wore a purple silk frock that fitted to perfection. It was trimmed with a profusion of lace of a pale shade of violet, with a touch of yellow ribbon here and there. Her fair, abundant hair was arranged with an easy grace, and her restless little hands sparkled with jewels.

I do not think Tom then, or ever, really admired Nan Lee beyond thinking her a pretty woman. Nevertheless he became immediately absorbed in talking to her, and he did not hesitate to express his admiration of her costume with its flowery suggestion. Nan responded by a coquettish glance and

gay answer, to which Tom made some trifling reply. It was a mere nothing, but it caused the brightness to fade from Dora's face, and all in a moment it seemed as though a wall had suddenly been erected between herself and her husband.

Bona, in her quiet way, hastened to restore the ruffled harmony, and Dora showed a fine spirit and good breeding by abetting the effort; still her manner did not relax toward Tom.

"Do you believe," Bona asked, as she addressed him, "the old theory that the notes of bird-music are the combination of the sounds they hear most frequently?"

"Indeed I do not, Mrs. Morgan," Tom laughingly replied, "even though your own voice is an argument in its favor. It has always seemed to me something like a bird's song transmuted into woman speech."

"Yes, there is a skyey element about you," Nan Lee exclaimed with a sarcastic smile. "Pray tell us, do you catch it from talking to the angels?"

My son's wife was too thoroughly a lady to show resentment to a guest, and she paid no attention to Nan, but Edward had less self-control, and there was a very

evident note of sharpness in his voice as he said:

"Whether the theory be true or false I do not know, but certainly my wife equals the birds in her capacity for song."

"And why not?" Bona replied; "surely if birds can sing all day long, we women, with an organization so much higher, and a capacity of joy so much larger, should be able to sing too."

And then Bona changed the subject, for she was too sweet and truly womanly a woman to permit the conversation to centre on herself. Just then she silvery chime of the hall clock announced the tea-hour, and a few moments later we were grouped about the table, where Bona always insisted on giving me—the old mother—the seat of honor at Edward's right hand.

Eastern simplicity ruled in the ordering of Bona's home, and while never remiss in the due observance of form, she retained many old-time, homelike, comfortable ways that are somewhat out of date nowadays. Perhaps it was this sense of comfort which suggested the table-talk that resulted in the plan of what Nan Lee straightway named, "The Brides' Menu Club."

"For we are brides, and we ought to be still enjoying our honeymoon," she said, with the plaintive air she assumed as occasion permitted; and then with a sudden change of manner she turned to Edward, asking, "How long does the honeymoon really last?"

"During the first six months of married life, according to the dictionary," Edward replied, "but my wife maintains there is no limit to its continuance."

Then began the discussion of how to apply the club theory Bona had in mind to the problem of housekeeping.

"Of course we do not want to form a cooking-class," Bona said. "Oh, no, that is not my idea. What I mean is, to infuse into the daily routine of breakfast, dinner, and tea, an environment suggestive of intellectual interest. I do greatly need its assistance," she declared, "for, from a child, I never had the least taste for 'baking and brewing,'" and with a loving glance toward her husband, she added: "The one shadow that met me as I crossed the threshold of our 'earthly paradise,' came from the fear that I would fail in the homely duties that are illustrated by bread white as snow, rolls

light as a feather, tea savory as nectar, and coffee rich in aroma."

"But how can one find an intellectual element in such things?" Nan asked, with a toss of her pretty head.

And then amid much laughter Bona unfolded her scheme, and, aided by Dora, a plan was proposed which certainly promised pleasure as well as profit. It was decided to test its feasibility the next week, when Bona was to give a dinner, for which she was to "provide not only for the tongue as a tasting instrument, but as a talking one."

"Yes," Bona said, "I will provide a conversational menu, to which every guest must strictly adhere."

But it is time I turned to Bona's diary for the details of this new-fashioned dinner-party.

CHAPTER XXIII

EXTRACTS FROM DIARY

I WILL confess I am slightly appalled as I sit down to plan the working out of what Edward calls my "novel scheme." For its key-note I determine to adopt Leigh Hunt's assertion, that "the commonest fare possesses a treasure of pleasant thoughts, fragrant as fairy tales."

I will also follow Edward's advice and prepare the most simple menu, and Edward must introduce the conversational element by some apt quotation, which will explain that the idea is not so much the actual substance typified by the different courses, as the suggestions linked with them, and which when elaborated will garnish every one of them with a poem-like association.

For example, we will first consider the food we classify as belonging to the wonders of the deep, which will be typified

by our simple course of fish. There is no end to the amount of interest suggested by just that one topic.

It includes stories of the olden times, rich in romance and glowing with quaint fancies, and the superstitions which existed when fish were regarded by some nations with reverence. And turning from the past to the present, I am sure Dr. Lee will describe the brave toilers who go a-fishing amid the perils of the deep, and on peaceful rivers and lakes, and among mountain streams and hill-side brooks. I know as we listen to his vivid word-pictures, we will almost feel the breezy freshness of the salt air; almost breathe the sweet resinous odor of pine and spruce. Neither will Dr. Lee forget to make us realize what it costs—I do not mean in money value, but in life and peril—to supply us with what we are wont to lightly term ordinary luxuries. If he gives too grave an aspect to this "topic," I, as hostess, must be ready to dispel the shadow, and I can think of no better way than by repeating the little poem called "Saturday Night in the Harbor." It gives such a happy picture of the fisherman's return home.

" Boats bound in across the bar,
Seen in fair colors from afar,
Quiver like a happy sigh,
As ships and shadows drifting by
Glide o'er the harbor's face,
Each to its Sabbath resting-place."

I will also quote Izaak Walton's quaint reflection: " Let not the blessings we daily receive from God make us not to value, or not praise Him because they are common; most men forget to pay them praise. But let not us, because praise is a sacrifice so pleasing to Him that made the sun and us, and still protects us, and gives us flowers and showers, and meat and content, and leisure to go a-fishing." Oh, I am sure the fish course of my dinner will prove interesting.

As for meats, I do not feel so confident of success, and yet the green pastures and quiet water-brooks are full of poetic suggestions of lambs and meek-eyed calves, and the patient cattle. Thinking of their mute sacrificial lives I am reminded of rugged old Luther, of whom we read, when he saw the cattle he exclaimed: " See the cattle in the fields—there go our teachers, the carriers of our milk, butter, cheese, and wool, who daily preach to us faith in God, and

that we should trust Him as our Father, knowing that He will care for us and feed us." No wonder ancient bard and modern singer have garlanded with flowers of song the heifer, "Soft-eyed thing of even color, without a dapple or speck." No wonder they have chanted the praise of the oxen, and have sung of

"The reign of rest and affection and stillness,
When day with its burden and heat had departed
and twilight descending,
Brought back the evening star to the sky, and herds
to the homesteads."

This is but one of the many scraps of verse I recall, and in seeking honor for beef and mutton, veal, lamb, and pork, we will only need to remember Charles Lamb's essays, Leigh Hunt's "Seer," and the poet Herrick and his pet pig. But the brightest praise bestowed on animal food will, I think, be given to

"God's cattle upon God's ain hills!
Where the merry brown hares come leaping
Over the crest of the hill,
Where the clover and corn lay sleeping
Under the moonlight still."

Tom Wolcott is enough of a hunter to describe a day when

> " All dim in haze the mountains lay.
> With dimmer vales between,
> And rivers glimmered on their way
> By forest faintly seen."

And when through fog and stream he toiled up rocky slopes, and amid tangles of underbrush, brakes, and bracken, with never a thought of weariness because of the hunter's reward. I seem to know in advance if Tom relates any such experience he will inspire Edward, who will take us into the very heart of the mountains, and just as our hearts are thrilled by Edward's tale of the encompassing loneliness of the hills, across his story, like a cloud-shadow falling across a sunny plain, there will flit "strange objects, in the gray mist, a herd of red deer. First will come the hinds running abreast in Indian file; then with longer strides one or two stags holding their antlered heads high in the air, as though listening for some sound behind them and sniffing the air in front of them at the same time; they will seem to pass as swiftly as ghosts, and then all in a minute the mist and the rain will

be gone," and in fancy we will behold "a blaze of hot sun on the moist moor with a sudden odor of bracken and young fern, and sweet-gale."

Oh, yes, I know my husband's description will be vivid as reality.

CHAPTER XXIV

EXTRACTS FROM DIARY

I BECAME so much interested yesterday in thinking of Edward's possible contribution to the menu topic, I did not half complete my own plan for elevating the ordinary routine of three meals every day by associating them with pleasant flights of fancy and still pleasanter memories. In proof of the wisdom of the scheme, I recall Sir Humphrey Davy's words, that "while there is no absolute utility in poetry, yet it gives pleasure and refines and exalts the soul." Hence I do not intend at my exposition dinner to slight even the plump little quail that, browned to the most appetizing shade, with heads tucked cozily under their wings, are to be served on delicate bits of toast, and generously garnished with curling parsley. The entire feathery tribe is to be represented by this small quail, and I propose to introduce this course by repeating Bryant's lines :

" For thee the duck on glassy stream,
The prairie fowl shall die ;
Thy rifle for thy feast shall bring
The wild swan from the sky."

It is not difficult to fancy the eager talk that will follow on wild birds and domestic fowls. We will wander, I am sure, in imagination, amid the haunts loved by "the wild but tender things whose homes are where the shade is full and thick," and I will suggest that we begin our quest among the winding creeks and marsh meadows, where the water-fowls hide in their sober garb of olive brown and gray, and where the wild duck shows the flash of ruby and sapphire-tinted feathers, as it soars away seaward, startled by the crack of the huntman's rifle, and the red-legged partridge darts behind some safe covert of rosemary, tall brake, or marsh grass. As for the stories of land birds they will out-run, I fear, the time we can spare them, for they have been praised in verse and famed in romance by other authors than Shelley, Wordsworth, and Hogg.

Nevertheless, the birds, although so prolific in suggestions affording conversation, will find rivals in the vegetables that are earth-nourished and air-fed. Yes, surely,

some one will repeat "the Song of the Sower"; some one will find the poem hidden among the crisp green leaves of my salad; some one will interpret the potatoes' homely ballad, and the melody that floats upward on aspiring beanstalks, and that is hinted by the opening peapods. Neither will the long list of other vegetables be forgotten. No, indeed, too much of poetry halos their growth, not merely because of their beauty of color, grace of form, and delicacy of flavor, but from their association also with the courtly company they have kept when serving as adjuncts at royal banquets from the days of Rameses, when radishes, onions, garlic, artichokes, and asparagus made part of an Egyptian dinner, just as they make part of our dinner nowadays. Savory herbs too must have a word of recognition; thyme, marjoram, sage, and mint; "they are so full of warm strength for healing, yet all of them without splendid honor or perfect beauty, richest indeed when crushed under foot."

Passing on to dessert compounds and the place they fill in my "bill of fare," I include among them sugar, flour, milk and cream, eggs, fruit, and all delicate confections.

The mere mention of eggs is like the suggestion of the first verse of a pleasant rhyme. Straightway it leads to thoughts of merry search for hidden-away nests in barn-yard and orchard, and it echoes with the sound of cackling hens and the music of New England farm life.

Just here I put Bona's diary aside for a few minutes. I want to add a page from my own memories of the table-talk that occurred during her illustrative dinner. For while the conversation was enriched by many rare scraps of ancient lore and modern thought, the sweetest bit of all, to my mind, centered around the simple story Bona told, when at the conclusion of the repast we gathered about the cheerful wood-fire.

Bona's tale was an illustration of what the recognition of the beautiful in nature means to many a sad soul who has gone far on in life missing it. It dated back to the summer before her marriage, when she had boarded for a few weeks at a farmhouse among the Berkshire hills. The home-mother, and ruling spirit in this hospitable old house, was a woman beginning

to age in body, as well as in mind and soul. In truth, like many another farmer's wife, she had become weary of life and life's lessons. She was a tall, slender woman, Bona said, with almost a forbidding exterior, and yet, although unconsciously, she had a poet's love of beauty in her soul.

All her life she had lived among the hills, but though every spring-time she had seen the wonder of new up-growing life, and every summer she had beheld the still greater wonder of the ripened harvest, she never had time to enjoy the beauty of it all, save, as she expressed it, "by a sort of flutter about the heart." But in the long twilights of the July evenings when her day's work was ended, she fell into the way of sitting with Bona in the porch, and it was then my son's wife revealed to Mrs. F.'s darkened eyes, and awakened in her long-closed heart, the perception of the beauty of God's world. And the latent love and appreciation of the beautiful was so quick to flash into brightness, in response to Bona's simple interpretation of nature, that before Bona bade her farewell, the good woman had begun to find in everything and everywhere the "trailing clouds of beauty," with

which life and the world are so full to the seeing eye and hearing ear.

But I must not linger over details. Enough that this woman from the dawning perception of what the Lord of heaven and earth meant by the soft breaking of the day, the gentle fall of night, and the coming and going of the seasons, came to find a joy even in the performance of the before-time irksome tasks, for she recognized they too could be done to the glory of God, and this recognition led her to grace them with a touch of beauty that imparted a charm to the most prosaic details of her life.

"This found expression in her wedding-gift to me," Bona said.

"Now for poetry in prose," Edward whispered, as Bona in her sweet way pleaded:

"Please do not smile, or if you do let it be tenderly. The day before our marriage a large box arrived, fastened with home-spun twine, and containing flowers? Oh, no, nothing of the kind. It was a cheese that box held, and behold that cheese bore the imprint of the most beautiful, delicate fern that ever grew in sheltered nook or mossy glade."

As Bona concluded her story Nan Lee exclaimed: "Wave it high, that fairy fern, cheese's sceptre, proclaiming the victory of beauty over curds!"

But Nan's mocking laugh did not prevent our all feeling the tender significance of Bona's tale. We all realized—except perhaps Nan—the blessed truth,

> "He who wanders widest, lifts
> No more of beauty's jealous veils
> Than he who from his doorway sees
> The miracle of flowers and trees."

We realized also, that all preparatory training, even if it be nothing more than the observation of God's work in the least flower by the roadside, may be made subservient to a higher earthly end, and thus become a heavenly work, and that thus the very petty annoyances of daily life may one day be given as a glorious oblation to our Divine Master.

CHAPTER XXV

IT is not my purpose in this record to give anything like a detailed account of Bona's life. Neither do I propose to relate the history of the Wolcotts' and the Lees', except as it serves to show Bona's influence, and to reveal her character. Henceforth, therefore, without paying any special attention to the regular order of occurrences, I will copy from her diary the ordinary every-day experiences which seem to me most suggestive of the way by which her daughter, and other young women, can make the most of the daily opportunities that occur in every life for doing good. Certainly Bona's example proves that these opportunities spring up in every path, if they are looked for.

To do good—yes, it has always been Bona's chief desire; like old George Herbert, willingly she "never let a day pass without comforting a soul or showing mercy." She realized also, that to accomplish this result

she must accept her fellow-mortals as they were, and that she must rely in her simplest words and deeds on "the divine guidance, from which issues that finest woman's tact which proceeds from active and ready sympathy."

As I have already said, Bona's sympathy was warm for Dora Wolcott almost from the hour of their introduction, and yet, she had known her a year before I find recorded in her Diary:

"I am very fond of Dora Wolcott. We had a most interesting talk yesterday. We were returning from a visit to the school in the hamlet where the mill-people live. The teacher is Mary Martin — the overseer's daughter. She is lame, and slightly deformed, but there is nothing painful in her appearance; she has a sweet face, with the look in it which comes only to those who pray much and often, and who know that their prayers are answered, even when the special requests seem refused. I understand that look, but it is difficult to explain to Dora that the bright smile with which Mary is wont to answer my greeting is reflected from the mysterious recognition which thrills hearts that know and love the Lord

Christ, like a meeting with kith and kin in a foreign land.

"No, Dora cannot understand this, because she knows nothing as yet of the meaning of one family in Christ, and of the bond of the 'Our Fatherhood' of God. But Mary's manner unconsciously suggested it, and, I think, it prompted Dora's question:

"'What do you think it means to be worldly? How can one live in the world and yet not be of it? Uneducated sensibility,' she continued, 'has such a charm, and Mary possesses it. Sometimes I think it almost outsteps the highest refinement of culture, just as true poetry flashes its light best through uncultivated mediums.'"

I could not conceal my surprise at hearing Dora advance an opinion so unlike her usual way of thinking. It seemed as though the spirit of the morning must have entered, with its sweet, tender influence, into her naturally proud heart. Certainly it was a most inspiring day; everywhere there was color, life, and light; every object suggested the "two worlds"—

> "The mystic heaven and earth within,
> Plain as the sea and sky."

I never remember seeing the color of wood, river, and sky more exquisite. The upper heavens were a deep blue, over which fleecy clouds floated like white-winged birds. Low down in the east a bank of blue-black clouds lay piled up against the horizon, making a rich background for the tree-tops, which were clothed in the tender green of the season in which God's presence in nature is most felt. The air was astir with the innumerable voices of the morning. The sweet west wind was laden with love-notes, as robins, purple finch, and vesper sparrows sang and chirped to one another. The plaint of the meadow-lark blended in with the more cheerful bird music and the drumming of downy woodpeckers. We heard, too, the cawing of a flock of crows, startled by our footsteps. Nor was this all. When our way led for a time through a wide stretch of woodland, the entanglement of elder-bushes, blackberries, and sumach that bordered the narrow foot-path seemed even more alive with birds. Brown thrushes and linnets were particularly numerous, and they were so tame and friendly they were not a bit disturbed when we peeped into a nest in the grass, and saw four tiny eggs

of torquoise blue, over which the mother bird watched as she swung to and fro on the slender trail of a bitter-sweet vine.

The ground in this shady place was still carpeted with late, lingering spring flowers. We found blue and white violets, Solomon's-seal, yellow sorrel, golden king-cups, white star-flowers, and pink coral-like drops of Indian hemp. And all these wildwood darlings were in profusion; although, according to my floral calendar, it is time for their rivals, sweet-brier roses and yellow lilies by the river bank, in place of the wild forget-me-nots, which looked like a patch of blue sky that had strayed down from heaven. It is late enough in the season, too, for the soft white meadow-rue, and for daisies, black-eyed Susans, and white ox-eyed with golden hearts. I do so love bird-life, and the beauty and bounty of all growing things, involuntarily I exclaimed with delight at each fresh discovery. Dora observed my pleasure with a kind, affectionate expression in her dark eyes, and it seemed in some subtle way to recall to her mind the question about being in the world, and yet not of it.

"I wonder," she said, "could one be

worldly in their love of the beautiful in nature?"

"Certainly," I replied, "unless they recognized the beauty as God's work, His gift, and the expression of His own perfect order and perfect love. Oh, yes," I continued after a moment's thought, "it is plain that our love of beauty may lift our eyes heavenward or turn them earthward."

CHAPTER XXVI

WITHOUT heeding my words, Dora followed the lead of her own thought, and again she said :

"The beauty that belongs to the sights about us surely appeals to the senses, and to love it, as you do, Bona, seems to me to be like loving a part of the world, in a worldly way, just as much as it is worldly for me to love art and music."

For a moment I hardly knew how to reply. I knew Dora's words were intended as a sort of challenge for me to meet and refute by what she calls my Christian faith ! I wonder why we are such contradictions to ourselves. I love my faith ; it is dear as my life ; indeed it is my life, and I long to have Dora Wolcott know the Lord Christ and His love as I know it. I long to have her eyes opened to the revelation of that love in everything, and yet I often hesitate when I speak to her of Jesus. I did then as I tried to tell how my religion is blended with every detail of life, a part of all I see

and enjoy. Before I had decided how I could explain this, she repeated:

"What is the world and love of the world? You, a minister's wife, ought to be able to tell. Is society to be sought or avoided by a Christian?" she added with a sigh.

So many thoughts pressed upon me as I endeavored to make Dora understand "that the only place in which we can overcome a wrongful love of the world is in the world," and that "whether society and social pleasure be good or bad, depends upon the end we have in view in seeking it, the place it holds in our minds and the principles which govern it." And then I remembered reading not long ago words which I repeated to Dora as well as I could recall them:

"If one enjoys social pleasures with no desire to give enjoyment to others, or if in giving them enjoyment the thing which delights us most is the homage paid to our own attractions, the favor we win, the delight of knowing that our beauty, or grace, or conversation are admired—if all these are the ruling element of our social pleasure, then be our success what it may, and whatever charms of refinement or elegance we

may present in our social relations, there is social worldliness, and it is a poor, bad thing, and an inevitably degrading one. So, too, social pleasure is social worldliness when it is sought and loved for its own sake alone merely as amusement, merely to fill up the vacancies of an unemployed life, and only because it banishes ennui for a moment." The same book goes on to tell that society is, however, indispensable to us. It is in itself good. "To be sure of this one has only to remember that the man who is entirely alone is entirely useless, and usefulness is the condition of the happiness of heaven, and therefore of all true happiness."

All this I tried to tell Dora, and she grasped my meaning, for in reply she said:

"Worldliness, then, you define as an undue love of the world without us, and I suppose the only way to escape it is by loving some better thing, and by possessing a more profound interest in the enjoyment of what belongs to the world within."

"Yes," I said, "'and they are the love of truth, the delight in growing wise, and the deeper, dearer happiness to be derived from

the consciousness that you have given yourself to God, and that thus it is the chief business of your life to cultivate every faculty you have, in the belief that He has given them to you that you may become His instrument for usefulness; and that He asks this of you because if you grant it, you enable Him to give you more of His own happiness than you can otherwise receive, and far more than you can imagine.'"

"And are we never free from worldliness," Dora said, "until this way of thinking has become the habit of our lives?"

"No, never," I replied; "and we must apply the very same law to our love of the beautiful in nature."

In the eagerness of discussion we had paused in our walk and sat down on a trunk of a fallen tree that lay a little off from the road. The bark in places was covered with mosses that varied from the deepest olive and golden hue to pale sea green, and close up to the mosses crept quiet gray lichens, touched here and there with red tips. Just at our feet stretched a great patch of feathery ferns, and in the stillness of the wood we could hear the

murmur of the wind in the tree-tops, the rippling of the river below the bank, and the whir and hum of insect life. Truly every sight and sound emphasized the exceeding beauty with which the world is full.

"How apt we are to feel," I said, "because we see so much that is beautiful, as though we saw it all. And yet the clearest and keenest perception might become larger. But after all," I added, as the author to whom I had already alluded says: "it is better to have little perception of it, or none, than to permit it to fasten our eyes and our thoughts and our enjoyments on the earth; to make us love it for itself, and be content with it; to dim our thoughts, and weaken our desires and aspirations after a higher happiness than any that can come through the senses."

As I ceased speaking I saw tears in Dora's eyes, and she repeated in a sad tone Keble's lines:

"'Of the bright things in earth and air
How little can the heart embrace!
Soft shades and glowing lights are there,
I know it well, but cannot trace—

Mine eyes unworthy seem to read
One page of Nature's beauteous book;
It lies before me fair, outspread,
I only cast a wistful look.'"

In answer to Dora's half-complaint I said: "Well, dear, if the recognition comes only gradually, may we not be sure that every effort after it will help to bring it; and as it comes it will open your eyes to the beauty of the beautiful, and it will open your mind to its lessons and significance."

Dora did not reply, and silently we rose from our lowly seat on the fallen tree and turned homeward. We hardly exchanged a word until we reached the parsonage gate. Then just before we separated she laid her small gloved hand on my arm, saying softly:

"Bona, I think I feel like old King Agrippa, ready to say as he did to St. Paul, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'"

Although Dora is not demonstrative, she kissed me as I said:

"Would to God, Dora, you could say not only almost, but fully, thou persuadest me." And without another word we parted.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE Sunday that followed Bona's talk with Dora was a rare day. From early morning until nightfall there was not a cloud in the sky. Edward's morning sermon was founded on the familiar words recorded in Matthew vii. 2: "For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." The truths he enforced were an outgrowth of the text, and they were full of the idea of a natural and necessary reciprocity between man and the things by which he is surrounded. His illustrations also were impressive, and many among the congregation were deeply moved. In fact, it was one of those sermons which few hearers can totally forget, and which some would be able to reproduce years afterward. It charmed the imagination by throwing exquisite lights upon homely experiences; it laid hold on the intellect by the exact correspondence between the idea and its

investiture of words; it subdued the conscience because it was the expression of an eternal law; it fastened itself on the memory by its unaffected method, which was simply the apt distribution of a number of topics that all centered around the Lord Christ.

There was a glance from below my son's massive brow that compelled attention and that seemed to read one's inmost thoughts. Indeed, it required all the gentle sweetness of his smile to do away with the impression of severity that sometimes accompanied that piercing glance. And yet, despite it, his sternest rebukes, even to the most careless and sin-hardened, softened into beseeching tenderness when he spoke of the Christ "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

The entire service that day from beginning to end was well fitted to fill a wife's and a mother's heart with gratitude. Yes, certainly it was a blessed experience to see the one we loved best on earth, in all the strength and beauty of his early manhood, standing there before the men and women who had known him all his life, preaching

the truth that "a man's faith does not consist of the many things which he affects to believe, or finds it useful to believe, but of the few things which he really believes, and with which he stands fronting his own soul and eternity, and that this faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God is sufficient."

Edward closed his discourse with the plea: "Remember, my friends, 'Every gift has its return; every act its consequence; every call has its answer in this great live, alert world, wherein man stands central, and each man gets out of the world of men the rebound, the increase and development of what he brings them, for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.'"

At the conclusion of the service many old friends flocked around me, eager to utter their congratulations on my son's eloquence and earnestness, and they all had a kind word for his young wife, whose sweet face was aglow with sentiment and the honest beauty of eyes which caught their brightness from her pure soul, that was not abashed even though strangers beheld her wifely love. I did not wonder that

Dora Wolcott felt the expression of Bona's face a better reply to her question regarding worldliness than any amount of argument, for Bona looked so thoroughly "in the world, but not of it," and there was a deeper reason for that look than the mere fact that "all women are unworldly when they love."

Certainly the Sabbaths of Edward's pastorate in Greenville were days to be held in grateful remembrance. "Proud days," I called them, but Bona said:

"No, hardly that, so much as blessed days of praise and thanksgiving."

Nevertheless a feeling of exultation, akin to pride, was blended with my emotions. I had deeper cause perhaps than Bona, the young wife, could understand. I had not been without anxiety when my son left me to encounter the temptations of school and college life. Every time he came home I had studied his face fearing to find a change. Many an hour I had wrestled in supplication that the Lord would keep my lad from evil. It had been a season of great anxiety also, when I knew of Edward's mental conflict, and struggle after absolute truth. Born and bred as he had been in a

Christian home, and from infancy surrounded by the atmosphere of Christian thought, when the time came for him to fight his own battle for individual faith in Christ, it was a hard conflict. All the more so because he was not credulous by nature, and was disposed to apply the sternest tests to what claimed to be the truth. Hence, for a brief period a dissolving flood of skepticism swept over him. He questioned all things, and was sure of none. But that struggle was worth all it cost, for at the darkest hour of doubt my son gave to God the pledge of heroic sincerity, and God met the longings of his soul with the certitude of an impregnable faith, and thenceforth he was satisfied to humbly receive as much as it pleased God to reveal to him, and gratefully to believe that was enough for his salvation.

In view of all this I do not think my emotion of exultation wrong, especially when the Lord has called him to a pleasant service, and when I felt a good degree of confidence that, even if later on God feed his soul with the "bread of affliction," Edward had a wife who would still be strong in all sweet womanly helpfulness,

not only in her home, but in the parish. For all the duties which belonged to the sphere of a minister's wife were always dear to Bona. She never found them a burden; she felt it to be part of her heritage as a child of God that she should serve His great family on earth, and whether the service proved great or slight, she rendered it faithfully, cheerfully, and thankfully, for to Bona thanksgiving was a blessed and holy exercise. I never knew any one who lived so truly in an atmosphere of gratitude. It was like a thread of gold interwoven with the most commonplace details of daily life.

"In everything give thanks." It was a ruling motive of her heart. A memory comes to me as I write which illustrates this. She and Dora Wolcott were talking of some event which led Dora to declare that thankfulness was an emotion she found it difficult to feel. A look of pained surprise shadowed Bona's face as Dora made the confession, and then the brightness returned, and Bona exclaimed:

"It will grow easier to be thankful the more you practice it, I am sure, Dora. Oh, yes," she added, in her gentle, yet enthusi-

astic way, "if you begin by thanking God for the least of your daily blessings, you will find they will grow in number more speedily than you can count."

"But what if your lot in life were full of disappointments, what if you were discontented with your circumstances?" Dora responded with an air of impatience.

Bona was not the least disturbed by Dora's petulance. Her voice was never sweeter than when she said:

"In such a case, if unable to begin with anything positive, why not begin with something negative, and, oh, do not neglect to give thanks, for thankfulness fills such a high place—even higher than prayer—in the Christian life."

I do not think Bona heard Dora's whisper, "But if one is not a Christian"—for without a pause, she added:

"When we pray we ask for what we want, and it is in one sense a selfish act, in order to bring down blessings on ourselves, but we praise and give thanks simply because our hearts are overflowing with love and gratitude to God, and we must speak it out."

Dora did not reply, and when she bade

Bona farewell there was no lighting up of her face. And yet, Dora Wolcott, like my son's wife, was then in the morning light of life's day, its glory was still upon everything—herself among them.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE following extracts from Bona's diary afford a glimpse into her home life—its companionship, its spiritual and intellectual atmosphere, and its serenity, despite an occasional stirring of the calm, like the one she describes.

DIARY NOTES.

"My husband spoke sharply to me today. I am so glad I know his impatience was caused by a passing emotion, and that it had nothing whatever to do with his heart. Oh, yes, I am sure Edward's irritation was physical. He was tired and a little overworked, and without seeming to heed his sharp words I suited my remedy to his need, and I proposed a horseback ride over to M——. There is nothing that does Edward so much good as a brisk gallop, and it was just the hour for it, toward the end of the day, when nature is most apt to be kindly and soothing.

"I was busy as a bee after he started, pre-

paring a surprise to greet his return. I knew he would be so pleased to find his sermon for next Sunday copied in my writing, which is clear and easy for him to read. As is wont to be the way when one is working for one they love, I became so engrossed in my task I entirely forgot his impatience. Indeed, how could I remember anything but my husband's love and devotion when surrounded on every side—as I am in this my little sitting-room—by signs of his care for my pleasure and comfort. I wonder was there ever any other wife whose special sanctum was so thoroughly the outcome of her husband's ideal as mine. Everything about it seems chosen to exactly meet my needs, and everything is so suggestive of not merely activity, but of achievement.

"This, to be sure, is the natural result when my husband planned and arranged every detail, for I never knew any one more impressed than Edward with the truth that life means growth, and growth means spiritual and mental progress. 'Grow in grace.' He repeats that text so often, and the growth of which it tells does not recognize limitation. It begins here and now, and

continues *then* and there, for it passes on and up, 'from height to height.' This truth of progression is so beautifully promised in the Gospel assurance, that 'of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.'

"I was pondering those words when I caught the sound of Edward's bounding steps upon the stairs. I knew from his quick, light tread the ride had worked its cure, and that he had returned with lightened spirit, brightened eye, and heightened color. Before I had time to close my Bible his rapid hand had opened the door, and he was standing by my side, looking down at me with a gaze of such dear love and tenderness.

"But before I tell of our talk about grace, I must describe my *boudoir*, as Edward playfully calls my small room. There is no excess of luxury about it, but it is pervaded by a sense of home, and suggestive of confidence and repose. I never cross the threshold without thinking of the Bible medium of comfort—'neither poverty nor riches.'

"Upholsterers had little to do with the arrangement of this cosey nook. Edward—so his mother told me—was jealous of every

touch not his own, and everything tells of his love. Each picture was chosen to convey some special thought, and his own hand hung them, his own eye selected the suitable light and height. Each book tells of the same loving thoughtfulness. Some of the volumes are arranged in an orderly manner on the tasteful book-shelves—made by himself—and these books seem intended for leisurely reading, while others are placed so invitingly near my hand, as I sit in the light graceful chair by my open desk, they seem to whisper, 'Often.'

"Before Edward's return I had drawn the window-curtain and shut out the lovely twilight of the autumn evening, and I had lit the shaded-lamp on my small reading-table. Its rays illuminated not only the pages of the open Bible, but they fell also like a caress on my hand, and glowed like a sunbeam as they centered on 'the ring that sets apart a woman to her holiest mission—wifehood'—or I better like the old-fashioned word, 'helpmate. It was at that wedding-ring my husband looked as I held up the copied sermon.

"'See, I have accomplished my work,' I said. 'Tell me, have I done it well?'

"With a glance at the written pages, he answered:

"'Perfectly, my darling!'

"And then Edward knelt by my side. He put his arm around me, and as I laid my head on his shoulder, he whispered:

"'Bona, I was impatient and querulous this afternoon. Can you forgive me?'

"As Edward uttered those words a soft light seemed to gradually rise and overspread his countenance, and as his eyes sought mine with an expression of deepest earnestness, he said:

"'Tell me how it is, dear one, you never get out of patience with me; never speak a cross word?'

"I could not reply for a little while, my husband's praise made me so humble, just as praise that comes from his love always does, for it makes me so long to be more worthy of his good opinion."

CHAPTER XXIX

DIARY NOTES

"WHEN at length I did answer Edward's question, I said: 'Perhaps you will not be pleased if I tell you the simple truth.'

"But he insisted that that was what he wanted to hear. And his dear face beamed with tenderness when I repeated: 'Do not be vexed; it is no slight to your manhood, but when you are a little bit out of humor I feel just as I do, when a child that it is my place to soothe and comfort is cross'— and nestling my hand in his, I whispered: 'And I know the ruffling of the quiet waters of our daily life is nothing more than the ripple of a breeze; nothing more than the falling of a snowflake that straightway melts in the sunshine of love. And always you are my teacher and my master.'

"After that we had a dear talk. I asked Edward to explain his idea of the meaning of the promise, 'Grace for grace.' 'Do the

words imply grace resembling grace?' I asked.

"'No, that cannot be,' Edward said; and he reminded me how the dominant grace of one season of a Christian's life and experience does not at all resemble, but is often set in contrast with the prevailing grace of another season—a new grace taking the place of an old one. This thought so emphasizes the soul's endless capacity for growth. It includes also the inexorable law of God's love. He gives grace for grace, He gives as His gifts are turned to service. He claims that we should be His fellow-workers. It is such a wonderful truth, this fact, that, 'we were made to attain to the Divine likeness; made to realize each in the narrow sphere of our fragmentary lives, each according to the measure of our ability, the fact of the Incarnation; to live in the light of that vision of absolute truth which has been opened to us; to live by the growth of that knowledge of God which He places within our reach through the fulfillment of daily duties.'

"'There is no doubt,' Edward went on to say, 'an element of sameness in all grace; but there is also a difference so

great that one kind of grace is in many respects not quite like another.'

"Then he dwelt on the necessity for present effort. 'We have nothing to do with past feelings,' he said. '"If you had all the leaves that were fresh and green this time last year, you could not make out of them one green leaf to-day. And the feelings of last year would not fit you now when you need the living grace for the living day." And, oh, how we need it,' he added, with such a heavy sigh, it made me look up at him.

"I saw at once its cause, and that he was still grieving over his sharp words. This regret vibrated in his voice, as with deep feeling he continued:

"'Yes, the grace we need now is the grace to work with: grace to take into the stress of conflict with self and temptation; grace to perceive how the gates of opportunity for serving God open and close; how the possibilities of to-day become if neglected the impossibilities of to-morrow.'"

"'And how work done makes work easier,' I said softly.

"At that moment we were interrupted. Hannah knocked at the door, which she

partly opened to say that Mr. and Mrs. Wolcott were in the parlor. Edward had been kneeling by my side, but he started to his feet at the sound of Hannah's voice, as though we were lovers surprised at a tête-a-tête. And so we were the happiest of all lovers—married lovers! My heart was so glad because of this as I went downstairs I could hardly keep from singing for joy. Oh, yes, married lovers are the happiest. How I wish Tom and Dora Wolcott were thus glad, and I know Dora longs to bridge over the restraint that has sprung up between them. To-night she looked at her husband with such a tender glance. And when they bade us good-night, and Edward and I went with them to the garden gate, I felt as we parted the time was so propitious for peace-making. It was so quiet in the pale, clear evening—the stars were twinkling like smiles, and the moon about to creep up from behind the eastern hills. Yes, surely, it was a time for those who had wounded one another to make confessions and to renew tender pledges of affection. But, alas! neither Tom nor Dora availed themselves of the opportunity, as I came to know the very next day.

CHAPTER XXX

DIARY NOTES

"I DO so grieve for Dora Wolcott, despite her cold manner she has such a warm heart, when she will let herself show affection. I say let herself, for she has a great reluctance to exposing it. But this does not dull her craving for intimacy and love; on the contrary, it is made more intense, I think, by her reserved nature. This makes the estrangement between herself and her husband all the sadder. It is such a puzzle to know how to help her to bridge the daily widening stream that divides them. Sometimes it seems as though their marriage was a great mistake, and one that will never be righted. My sympathy is with Dora, still I realize she is not free from blame, and yet, I think, she longs for peace, even though the highest incentive does not yet rule her conduct, I mean the doing all for Christ's sake.

"From the very beginning of our ac-

quaintance I have wondered how Dora and Tom came to marry, they are so utterly unlike in taste and temperament. She is not inclined to speak of her trials, although I think for a long while she has wanted to confide in me and yet hesitated, because of her fine sense of the unfitness of telling even a dear friend,—as she now regards me,—the storms of her married life. But yesterday it came about so naturally, indeed she could hardly do otherwise than speak. She had given orders that if I called I was to come unannounced to her morning-room. Thus it happened that I became an unwilling witness of one of those conjugal jars that are fast becoming almost a daily experience in the Wolcott's beautiful home.

"Dora's morning-room is especially charming, it seems a place only meant for contentment and happiness. Everything is redolent with affluence and beauty; the atmosphere, whatever the season, is always fragrant with the sweet odor of flowers; the furniture is artistic, graceful, and interesting, and comprises a variety of styles, and the etchings and engravings that adorn the walls are all of them exquisite works of art.

"I found Dora in her favorite window-

seat; she was busy with a dainty bit of embroidery. I knew what for. Tom knew too. And yet, although 'hard speech between those who love is something so dreadful,' just as I entered the room he uttered words that made my heart beat fast with indignation, and I knew Dora's heart beat still faster, while the color flushed into her face, and as suddenly paled, leaving her so white I thought she would faint. Tom meanwhile paid not the slightest heed to his wife's evident emotion, as with a bow and good-morning to me, he left the room.

"When at length Dora regained her wonted composure, she tossed aside the knotted skein of silk her trembling hands were powerless to wind, as she said sadly: 'There is no good trying; it is all a hopeless tangle from beginning to end.'

"I did not reply by words, but I sat down by her side, and as she laid her head on my shoulder, I let her sob out the sorrow and disappointment. There was no need for details. I knew something of the 'all' Dora meant; I knew how Tom's indolent ways tried and vexed her, all the more because he has plenty of dormant power if only he would use it. I knew how he met

all her plans for helping the mill people by the easy rejoinder, 'Let well enough alone,' and how, more from the love of opposition than from conviction, he maintained that the best way is to take life as one found it. But all this is a secondary trial to Dora compared with the annoyance his foolish attentions to Nan Lee occasioned. I am sure at first Tom had no thought of really wounding his wife; it was just a boyish love of teasing, and if Dora had accepted it thus as mere play, I think it would have amounted to nothing more than a passing fret to Dora, and an amusement which Tom would have soon felt foolish and to be abandoned. But, because Dora made much of it, Tom became more and more obstinate, until at last he fell into the way almost every day of going for a chat with Nan Lee, or to try some new song, or piece of music. And full well I know that Dora never sees him open Dr. Lee's gate without a sinking of heart and a pang of jealousy. But I sat down to record our conversation.

"'Friendship,' Dora said, 'or what we called friendship, was satisfying enough before marriage, and I told Tom it was all I had to give for——'

"At that word 'for' Dora suddenly became silent, while a far-away look came into her dark eyes, as though she were looking backward to some 'might have been.' But whatever the memory that stirred Dora's heart, she made no reference to it. Oh, no, indeed she had far too noble and loyal a nature for that; she is a true wife, even when Tom is most trying.

"'After marriage,' she presently said, 'what I called friendship took another form, and day by day my dream of what wifely devotion meant grew sweeter and stronger, and I hourly became more sensitive to Tom's wishes, more alive to his opinions; I longed to please him, and during the first weeks we were happy. And then came the acquaintance with Nan Lee'—and a great sob sounded in Dora's voice, as she murmured, 'you know the rest.'

"Yes, I knew. I am thankful we were interrupted just then, for I did not know what to say to Dora, even though my heart was full of sympathy. I wanted Edward to tell me what to reply, for I am always afraid to trust myself when I feel so deeply. Then, too, the words that came to me seemed hard and cold despite my overflow-

ing tenderness. And how could I out of my happiness preach to Dora that duty remained. How could I remind her that 'although joy had gone from her, service remained, and that out of her very sorrow she might learn lessons that would help her to meet and comfort the sorrows of others.' How could I tell her that 'marriage is a sacramental vow—that love is something that out-reaches happiness; and that her experience of disappointment in married life may be used to help forward the great work by which sin and sorrow are made to cease.' How could I tell her, that, 'the higher life begins for us when we renounce our own will.' No, I could not say all this, and if I had, Dora's spirit was not free and open that hour to receive such counsel. It always takes time before one is ready to learn the lesson of disappointment, and this is particularly true of a trouble like hers, which is not an affliction sent by God, and thus sanctifying; it is so entirely a trial of Tom's, and her own making, and thus it cannot help stirring bitter and hard emotions.

"Until that moment I think I had never half realized—dear and sacred as it has

been—the full blessedness of a marriage like mine.

"As I walked down the village street, under the boughs of the far-stretching maples and elms, the flowers in every garden gave forth sweetness, and the signs of life and growth were so about me, all of them laden with the assurance of the immortal hope, which when truly felt has power to illumine daily life, and its simple duties, and common affections with sacredness and glory. The sweetness and peace of the day did its work in my disturbed heart. I seemed to feel it a mute foreshadowing that out of Dora's present trouble the afterward fruit of righteousness and peace would ripen—for when Dora begins to pray for herself she will pray for Tom too—and the answer to prayer is always 'an answer of Peace.'"

CHAPTER XXXI

DIARY NOTES.

"ALTHOUGH my hopes were bright that the future would bring happiness to Dora and Tom Wolcott, the sadness caused by their present estrangement had not gone from either my heart or face, when an hour later I entered the wide-open door of my own peaceful, love-warm home. I went straightway to Edward's study, and his loving eyes in a moment detected that something was amiss. And as he led me to a low chair he bent and kissed my flushed cheek, as he asked:

"'What is the meaning of the shadow on my little wife's face?'

"There were tears in my eyes as I replied, but not until 'our hour' had we time to talk the matter over. 'Our hour,' it is just between the daylight and the dark. It seemed long to wait, for my heart was full, and my husband knew it, and when he left me to go to his study after lunch, he said so gently:

"'Do not try to solve the intricate web of life, Bona, the problem of permitted sorrow, suffering, and sin. It is a useless effort; no one ever yet was wise enough to explain it. We can only rest in the blessed knowledge that God knows and loves, and our part is to avoid all the evil we can, and to help and comfort others in their struggles,' and with another kiss Edward left me.

"He went to finish a sermon, and I went to the library to meet a class of young girls who were waiting for me, in what they called the 'sunshine corner' of the room. We had a happy afternoon together; the object of this weekly meeting is to sew for 'the little widows in India,' and to learn all we can of that and other countries where the light of the Gospel is beginning to penetrate the darkness of ignorance and misery.

"After the young girls went home I was tired, and I fell asleep in the corner of the lounge where my husband found me when he came for the twilight talk. His step was so light it did not wake me, still I think I must have felt his presence, for the moment my eyes opened, I exclaimed: 'I thought you had come, I am so glad!'

"He drew a chair close, and as I nestled my hand into his, he said:

"'Yes, I have come to hear all my little wifeling's gossip.'

"'Oh, Edward,' I remonstrated, 'do you think I am in danger of becoming a gossip because I tell you everything?'

"'No, dear, not a bit of it,' he replied; 'why, it is part of the sacredness of our love and our home life that we tell one another everything.'

"After a brief silence, Edward continued: 'A gossip, as I understand the word, is some one outside a home, who endeavors to pry into it, for the sake of hearing something that he or she may carry into other homes; such a person is like a walking newspaper for other people to read. But tell me,' he asked, 'what is troubling your dear heart?'

"And then I told of my call on Dora Wolcott. At first I thought Edward was not going to reply, for he seemed to change the subject.

"'Do you remember,' he said, 'a talk we had long ago about "Grace for grace"?'

"'Yes, indeed,' I replied; and then I told Edward how, after it, I made a study of

the word 'grace' which occurs so often in the Bible.

"With a smile he listened, and asked: 'Did you discover that people who lacked grace were very disagreeable people, a torment to themselves and to those with whom they live?'

"'Certainly,' I responded, 'and I discovered also that the necessity for possessing grace has been appreciated from the earliest ages. Long even before Christ preached His gospel of love.'

"'Yes,' Edward said, "'the Greeks and the Romans used to talk about some one called a grace, and still more they used to talk of the three graces; they fancied that they were spirits of some kind in the shape of beautiful, and amiable, and innocent maidens, who took delight in going about the world and making people happy and amiable, like themselves.'"

"'But,' I interrupted, 'what has all this to do with Tom and Dora's Wolcott's sad estrangement?'

"'Wait and you will soon know,' Edward answered; and then he continued to tell how "the ancients' appreciation of grace was like looking through the long end of a telescope

until Christ came to reveal a ten thousand times better grace than ever they had dreamed—even grace for grace—for while all the grace of this world comes from Him—health, and youth, and happiness, and all the innocent pleasures of life—over and above all this comes a deeper and a nobler grace—spiritual grace—the grace of the immortal soul, which makes men and women loving and lovable, pure and true, gracious and generous, honorable and worthy of respect, and this is the grace which makes them a comfort to themselves and to all around them. And this was what the Apostles taught the heathen, and their teachings were true, for just so far as people pray for Christ's grace and give themselves up to be led by God's Spirit they become full of grace themselves, loving, gentle, and courteous." 'And now I come,' Edward said, 'to the root of the trouble between the Wolcotts', the Lees', and all married people who fail to remember the solemn truth St. Paul proclaimed in the words which declare them "Heirs together of the grace of life." It is this grace which makes life worth living; ay, makes it a foretaste of heaven upon earth; for when man and wife are

heirs together of this grace of life they possess those tempers which make life graceful and pleasant, giving way to each other in everything which is not wrong, studying each other's comfort, taking each other's advice, shutting their eyes to each other's little failings, and correcting each other's great failings, not by harsh words, but silently and kindly by example.'

"After this talk with Edward I understood the secret of the unhappiness in Tom and Dora's and the Lees' home, for how can they be happy when they cannot pray, and as Charles Kingsley said: 'Married people cannot pray when they are discontented with each other. They feel themselves wrong, and because they are parted from each other they feel parted from God too, and their selfishness or anger rises as a black wall, not merely between them, but between each of them and God. And so the grace of life is indeed gone away from them, and the whole world looks dark and ugly to them, because it is not bright and cheerful in the light of Christ's grace which makes all the world full of sunshine and joy.'"

CHAPTER XXXII

IT takes but a moment for my pen to span the three hundred and sixty-five days of the second year of Bona's life as my son's wife; and yet, perhaps, it was a year fuller of joy both to Edward and Bona than any that came before—or have come since—in their lives. In Bona's diary I find mention of the great and wonderful happiness that came to them that year with the birth of their baby boy—little Roy. "A God-given joy," Bona called him. But it is time I turned to her diary for the account of that happy time. When Roy was six months old she wrote:

"Love—individual love—is so endowed with its own peculiar intensity I cannot compare and measure my love for my husband and child. And yet, that was what I was trying to do when Edward came into the nursery this morning. I will never forget the expression of his dear face as he gazed down on 'his treasures' as he called baby and me. Without waiting for him to utter

the words that lay back of that look, I exclaimed:

"'Oh, Edward, was ever anything half so beautiful as our baby?'

"For a moment I did not quite understand Edward's reply: 'Take care, my darling,' he said, 'that you do not spoil our little son with your great love.'

"My eyes filled with tears as I asked: 'Are you afraid to trust him to me?'

"'Yes, dear,' he replied; 'I am afraid in the same way that I am to trust myself.'

"I knew then what my husband meant. There was no need for him to add St. Paul's caution: 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.' As I remembered the verse a sudden fear—like a shadow falling across a sunlit meadow—for a moment fell across the joy of my heart. Am I in danger of making idols of my husband and child? Yes, I know I am, and I told Edward how glad I was he had opened my eyes to see the danger. And then for the second time within half an hour he puzzled me, as in reply, he asked·

"'Will you always be thus ready to be helped?'

"'Yes, by God's grace,' I whispered.

"At the sound of our voices baby stirred, and I lifted a warning finger to silence further speech until the little fellow slept again. Those moments of silent companionship were so full of sweet and dear heart communion. This silent language by which those who love understand one another without uttered words is so wonderful, so mysterious. I do pity husbands and wives who know nothing of it. Ten minutes later Edward stole softly from the room, and I was left to ponder on his warning, and the responsibilities solemn as precious, that come with motherhood. As I asked myself the difficult question, 'How can I meet them?' the perplexity became illumined as by a flash of light—'Love, let love be at once the motive power and the constraining principle.' As this light shone in my heart I bent over the sleeping child, and kissed the rosy little creature, saying softly:

"'Yes, I will strive to train my darling as the Lord trains me. Oh, the rest to fathers' and mothers' hearts to be themselves children, receiving the very same training which they are to pass on to their little ones; diluted, indeed, to their recep-

tive capacities, whilst jealously guarded from adulteration.'

"I am wondering, may not even a mother's gravest displeasure wear the aspect of grieved love? The directions for Christian parents are so explicit: 'Train up a child in the way he should go,' and the promise is so definite, 'when he is old he will not depart from it.' But how may 'the way' be known? Truly 'a divine chart traces out the divine way.'—'From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.'

"My pondering was interrupted this morning by a call from Dora Wolcott. Dora's boy is three months older than our little lad, and Nan Lee's baby girl a month younger.

"It is singular how the leading events in our lives seem in outward things to run parallel and yet, in the inner heart-life, there never were three women whose experiences were more unlike.

"For a brief time after the advent of child-life in the Wolcott's and Lee's homes, I hoped the chief cause of their unhappiness would be put away forever. But, alas!

already they have drifted back into the aforetime unsatisfactory life. Tom has resumed his indifferent manner toward Dora, and Nan Lee is just as ready as ever to sing and chat with Tom, with no apparent appreciation of the earnestness of wife and motherhood. And yet, Nan is fond of her little daughter. Meanwhile Dora is fast becoming entirely absorbed in thoughts and plans for the future of her boy. It was of him she came to talk with me this morning.

"'How snug and pretty your nursery looks,' she said, as she glanced around the room; 'but do you think Roy notices such things?'

"'No,' I replied, 'he is too young to notice details; at the same time I think he is old enough for me to begin to train his taste, and already he has become accustomed to neat ways; he is uncomfortable if his little hands are soiled, and already, too, he looks from one to another picture on the wall, and that is why I put pretty pictures there, and as he grows older I will talk to him about them, that he may learn to like beautiful things.'

"'Do you really believe you can train such a mite of a child to orderly ways; do

you really suppose it will influence his taste to love the beautiful, because he sees it now in his infancy?'

"I told Dora I felt sure of it, and I am equally sure that God's dear love may find entrance into my darling's tender little heart, almost as unconsciously as he learns my mother-love, and that the idea of the one will be interwoven with an instinctive sense of the other."

CHAPTER XXXIII

DIARY NOTES

"I HAVE a blessed joy to record to-day, Dora Wolcott has at last given her heart to Christ. I have said less to her lately about the peace of the life hid with Christ in God. I felt it safer to leave her with the Lord, and His working in individual souls is so different, I have striven to use great care not to intrude upon or to interfere with it. For sometimes, when I repeated our Saviour's tender plea, 'Come unto me and I will give you rest,' there seemed to be a sort of rebound in Dora's spirit, as if she drew back from the very threshold of that one rising step, the golden portal, through which a repentant soul passes from the poverty of self into the glorious liberty of Christ. And after such an experience we would part sadly, I in my impatience bitterly disappointed.

"But yesterday all was different, and in answer to some question of mine, she said

so gently: 'I do try to come unto Him, but I cannot find the rest.'

"I felt words were powerless before the yearning of her soul, and for a moment my heart failed me; and then, like the light of sunshine after a night of darkness, I suddenly remembered how, when our blessed Lord was on earth, and His disciples could not help those who came to them, He bade them bring them to Him; and as I repeated the Gospel verse to Dora, I softly added: 'Shall we go to Him?'

"She clasped her arms around me, as in reply she half-whispered, 'Yes, oh, yes!'

"As we knelt side by side I simply told the One of all love and tender mercy that He knew I could do nothing, but that I brought her to Him.

"Intense silence followed. I was conscious of no slight struggle in Dora's soul. After a brief time she said in a tone of deep feeling: 'Pray again.' I did—and then silence again—broken at last by Dora, as in a slow and solemn voice she repeated:

"'Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!'

"After that again there was silence between us for many minutes, but I knew Dora had come to Christ.

"Presently she said: 'This is rest, found at last. Oh, how good God is!'

"And her happy head was laid on my shoulder with the tender whisper:

"'And now we will pray for my husband and our child'; and we did.

"'How twofold is the Lord's dealing with souls under such circumstances. It is as if the Divine Potter had a hand on each, moulding the clay according to His own intensely discriminating workmanship, producing a more complete surrender in the one, for the precious privilege of guiding the other into the haven of Divine love.'

"It was thus later on Dora told Edward of that sacred hour. 'Life,' she said, 'had become ugly to me, its surroundings uncongenial. I felt as though I were tied to one remorseless reality from which I could never emancipate myself. And then Jesus met me, my long-closed eyes were opened. I saw "the King in His beauty."'

"This was not all Dora said, she told of my influence, and how it had helped her, and, oh, I am so thankful. And then Ed-

ward enumerated, for us to remember, some of the peculiar privileges that belong to God's children." 'Loftiness of truth—"he shall dwell on high"; Security—"his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." "His bread shall be given him," for Christ said, 'I am the Bread of Life.' "His water shall be sure," for Jesus said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give shall be in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Nor is this all,' Edward continued, 'His promise changes from history or prediction to an address to the believer personally—Christ shall be manifested to the heart of faith—and then what a vision! We shall behold a land of fairness,—of sunny distance with distance still beyond.'"

"It was beautiful to see the look of peace on Dora's face when she bade us good-bye, and turned homeward with the new and precious hope in her heart.

"It will be *truly home now*, as I told Edward; for however rich one's surroundings, 'a home is not a home unless the roots of love are ever striking deeper through the crust of the earthly and the conventional into

the very realities of being—not consciously always; seldom perhaps; for the simplicity of loving grows by living simply near nature and God'; and it is thus I know Dora will live henceforth.

"Writing all this about Dora Wolcott's spiritual life makes me wonder why I have said so little about Jack Lee in these diary pages, for my husband and I regard him with a warm affection, and an interest as sincere as we feel in Dora. By nature he is so loyal to truth, so faithful in friendship, and since he became a Christian these natural traits of character have developed so beautifully.

"Surely if we pray and are patient all will yet come right, and the homes and hearts of our dear friends will know the meaning of true happiness. Indeed, I feel sure of this, for Jack will now be strong—with the strength Christ gives—to help and influence Nan, as he never could when he strove to do it by his own unaided strength.

"And now that Dora has opened her heart to let the kingdom of heaven enter, her manner will soften Tom, and they will all realize the truth of which Edward talked with me so long ago, and that as husbands and wives they are heirs together of the grace of life.

"Oh, how I long for the time when they will feel that 'as married people they are not meant to merely feed together for a few short years at the same table on the bread which perishes, but to feed forever together on the bread which comes down from heaven, even on Christ Himself, the light of the world.' When once they feel this how can they help 'becoming more and more gracious to each other, and growing nearer and dearer to each other, more worthy of each other's respect, love, and trust.' And then for Tom and Dora, Jack and Nan, as for Edward and me, the solemn words,' till death us do part,' may mean what they will —death although it may part these perishing mortal bodies, will have no power over the immortal souls, for we will all belong to Christ, who conquered death, and live by His everlasting life.

"Edward agrees with me in hoping for all this, and yet, I think, he is impressed with a fear that it will require some sharp afflictive discipline to open Nan's eyes to the folly of her present desire for admiration, and it will cost no slight struggle for Tom Wolcott to overcome his own self-will and self-pleasing."

CHAPTER XXXIV

DIARY NOTES.

LITTLE ROY has not been quite well for a day or two. Dr. Lee came to see our darling this morning, and, just as he was leaving, something in his expression led me to tell him how sure I felt of a blessed sequel to all the present pain and disappointment that now over-glooms his home. His face flushed with emotion, his eyes flashed, and his fine, sensitive mouth quivered as I spoke. He has never inclined to religious conversation, not even since he made a public confession of his faith in Christ and united with the Church. "Piety is character," he has been wont to say, "and I want to have my good name associated more with my heart than my head."

This same delicate reserve prevents any reference on his part to his personal trials, and he merely said, "Thank you," in reply to my words, but the tone of his voice was a sufficient assurance that he was not displeased. Sometimes I almost agree with

the author who wrote: "The voice is the surest interpreter of character; its tones lie deeper than the lines of the face—yet behind face and voice is the one soul, and each of its revelations harmonize with the other when both are understood."

Dr. Lee said the cause of little Roy's restlessness is due to a slight attack of fever.

"It is a sickly season in Greenville, and fever has spread among the mill-hands." This was what Dr. Lee said, and his face grew stern, as he continued to tell of his urgent appeals to Tom Wolcott to pay immediate attention to the draining of a stretch of marsh-land that lies midway between the hamlet and our end of the village. But thus far nothing has been done, although Edward also, has urged Tom to attend to the matter—and now—is the dreaded fever to enter our own homes?

Dr. Lee encourages me to hope not, and already, since trying the remedy he prescribed, our precious boy seems better, and my anxiety is greatly relieved.

That sentence was the last Bona wrote in her diary for weeks. I turn from it with reluctance, for it leads from sunshine into

shadow, and yet, were I to leave the story of those weeks untold I would fail to record the experience, which beyond all others of her early life, reveals Bona's trust in her Heavenly Father, for even when in the midst of thickest darkness, and bitterest trial, her faith never wavered. Then too, without that trial, her Christian development would have been incomplete, for it was an ordeal that so tested her reliance on the Divine Strength made perfect in human weakness. Yes, doubtless, Bona needed to thus prove by actual experience the wonderful sustaining power and grace of that strength, and my son also needed it to establish his faith in Christ. Since that early testing, thank God, every night of sorrow that has come to them, has been illumined by the Light that shines in their hearts to give "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But in spite of this trust it has not always been easy to discern the will of God. Nevertheless the fountain of their faith has kept pure. Hence, "the water of life must flow from it, and each day's work has contributed to the great stream of life that flows out from the city of God for the

healing of the nations, and in that stream all trials get turned into gold."

But it is time I told of that first great sorrow that came to my son and his wife. I have no desire to question the equality of the sexes. I simply assert that a boy fills a different place in parents' hearts than a girl. Thus while Edward did not love little Roy any better, perhaps not so tenderly, as he loves the daughter—for whom I pen these pages—he regarded the lad with an affection which led him to look upon him as an extension of himself, as it were—the son, who was to prolong his name, to be the heir of whatever honor he might win in life, and live on among men long after he had passed away.

As for Bona, she loved the boy not merely with the wealth of her motherly devotion, but from the hour of his birth she seemed also to identify him in a special manner with his father, and an element of wifely loyalty, and sanctified pride, hope, and joy blended with her mother-love. To me—the grandmother—the child was all the dearer because he bore my husband's name. Added to all this, Roy was a rarely lovely boy, a delight to the eyes, and a joy to the heart.

CHAPTER XXXV

DURING the night that followed Dr. Lee's first medical visit on little Roy, the sweet child became suddenly worse, but on the third day he seemed to rally. All the morning he sat up in his little cot, leaning his curly head on his mother's bosom. He looked more like a cherub that had strayed from heaven than like a mortal child, and he was never more lovely and loving.

And Bona—my son's wife—had a beauty of expression such as Raphael has portrayed in pictures of the divine maternity. That day, alas! was the last of hope for Roy's recovery. On the morrow one of the dreadful vicissitudes of illness occurred. Human skill proved powerless. "The child is dying" was the message that greeted me at sunrise. Half an hour later I opened the door of Bona's nursery; before I crossed the threshold I knew that little Roy had passed from earth to Heaven. "Jesus had called the little child unto Him." And because it was the Lord Christ who thus called her darling, because it was the

Heavenly Shepherd who carried her lamb in His arms, Bona, even in the midst of her agony, could still look up and say,—"Thy will, not mine, be done."

When I entered the hushed room, Edward and Bona were kneeling by the child's motionless form. Bona's head rested on her husband's breast, his arm encircled her, and yet the strong man was weaker than the feeble woman that hour, for a woman's love is such a marvelous power, and for Edward's sake she was calm. Yes, Bona was perfectly calm; there was no wild agitation, no uncontrollable grief; all was still and peaceful. The only sound was Edward's voice, no louder than a whisper as he besought the Lord to make them submissive to His will, and then Bona spoke, and together they thanked God for the gift of the dear boy, the joy, the sweet blessing of his mortal life. "Ah, what peace there is in an accepted sorrow." Even in that hour of supreme grief they recognized "it was well with their child."

"No wanderings more for him,
Safe in the home above;
Yes, safe forever, safe and blest,
Where they go no more out,

With Jesus, whom he never grieved
By any sin or doubt."

But enough. Even though these pages are for Edward and Bona's daughter, I hesitate in drawing aside the veil from before that sacred experience; and there is no need to do it, she knows her parents and how then, and ever since then, her mother has been able to say:

"Well done of God to halve the lot,
And give him all the sweetness;
To us the empty room and cot;
To him the heaven's completeness.

"To us, the grave—to him, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in;
To us the silence in the house;
To him the choral singing!

"Grow fast in heaven, sweet flower clipped,
In love more calm than this is,
And may the angels, dewy-lipped,
Remind thee of our kisses.

"While none shall tell thee of our tears,
These human tears now falling,
Till after a few patient years
One home shall take us all in—
Child, father, mother—who left out?
Not mother, and not father."

It was early morning when we had the funeral service. Edward went through it calmly, and never did the words of everlasting hope sound so rich and full of the divine power—their child was not dead—they would meet him again. "The Lord gave and the Lord had taken away." "Blessed be the name of the Lord." This was the language of their sorrow-stricken hearts.

"Yes, God is keeping our darling for us," Bona said; "we will have him again, but," and sobs broke the words, "I have to pray I may not make an idol of him—my child in Heaven!"

When we turned away from that little grave, life had a new meaning, for Tom and Dora Wolcott and Jack and Nan Lee. They had seen "God's infinite blessing on a true marriage; how it gives strength to weakness; how it takes the bitter from disappointment; the sting from sorrow; how it gives the silver lining to the darkest cloud; how it helps the loving pilgrim heavenward." They realized too the meaning of the reverse of this. And Tom and Nan, then and there, resolved to henceforth seek to supply the needs of their human hearts, not by mere idle pleasure-seeking,

but by following the ideal made real in Jesus, and which is able to give manhood to man, and to make the woman feel that she is a woman. As conscience brought home this solemn truth to them, their souls seemed to spring forward to hail the light of duty as the bird upon the hillside, when the sunshine begins to scatter the mist, claps his wings, and salutes the light with gladness. Nevertheless it required many a hard struggle for an easy indolent man of the world like Tom Wolcott to become an humble follower of Him who said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." And for Nan the struggle to submit her will to God's will was still harder. Sometimes I have thought neither Tom nor Nan could have had strength of purpose to carry on the effort after a better and higher life had not the lesson of little Roy's death—which Tom knew, humanly speaking, was due to his neglect of applying sanitary laws to the draining of the fever-breeding marsh-land—been enforced by Edward's grave illness. And it too was due to Tom's neglect of duty—and Tom loved my son like a brother.

It happened in this way. After little Roy's departure the epidemic spread, and Edward, who was never slack in his duty as a pastor, was occupied night and day for weeks, watching by the sick, praying by the dying in homes where the air was clogged with the poisonous mist that rose from the meadows. When at last he was prostrated, he lay sick and nigh unto death for weeks, and when the fever left him and he began to lift his head from the pillow, he was the mere shadow of the strong man who had been stricken down when in the full beauty and vigor of young manhood.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AS I have said, the deepest emotions of Bona's heart when her baby boy went from earth to Heaven are too sacred for me to relate even to her daughter. And I leave those pages untold, but I add the brief mention she made of the influence her own and Edward's great sorrow had on their friends.

DIARY NOTES:

"I think I never understood until now the full meaning of St. Paul's words: 'None of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself.' And even now, while I give thanks for God's great mercy to our dear friends, the Wolcotts and the Lees, it still seems so wonderful that we—I mean Edward and myself—needed to be thus used, as it were, to bring them—Tom and Nan—to Christ. And still more wonderful is it that our precious Roy's going from us should prove the link in the chain of providence that has led to this blessed result. It makes his dear, innocent, beautiful earth-

ly life so infinitely sacred. Think, only a baby—and yet his brief stay on earth was freighted with an influence, that reaches on from the now and here of mortal existence, to the immortal and blessed Hereafter."

It is thus Bona wrote, but had she read their hearts she would have known the influences which changed Tom Wolcott and Nan Lee, were not so much due to little Roy's life and death, as to her own sweet example of trust in God in the midst of grief. For truly it was Bona's influence that touched the better part of Tom Wolcott's soul—the child-heart within the man's—by a pathos that appealed to thoughts that had been long dormant, or kept in the background rather, by the admittance of a selfish, although delicate egotism and desire for self-pleasing. Even when Edward had reasoned with him about his self indulgence. Tom's soul—the very self of him, had been like a shrine hidden in a labyrinth; round it there were a hundred ways, but only one reached its centre, and it was by that one Bona's influence entered.

As for Nan Lee, every time she looked at her baby girl and remembered Bona's lonely nursery, her heart smote her with bitter re-

morse. For full well Nan knew that she had encouraged Tom Wolcott's indolent indifference to a duty that touched the public health. simply for the sake of winning for herself amusement and his admiration of her beauty and brightness.

It was not many weeks after little Roy left us when Nan tried to tell Bona some of the lessons she had learned those sad days. And then she and Bona talked long and earnestly, and Bona spoke of her child, safe in Christ's fold, and how, blended in with her heart's yearning for his visible presence was the hope that shone through the darkness of her anguish, like a ray of light, assuring her that God's taking her darling was all right.

As they talked together Nan Lee's heart suddenly awakened to the earnestness of life. And when she bade Bona good-night it was to seek her husband, and to make a full confession to him of all her folly, and Jack Lee was ready with forgiveness.

Thus it was the angel of death, that entered Edward and Bona's home, outspread wings of mercy that not only enfolded them, but reached onward and encompassed other hearts and homes.

I say mercy, for the gates of immortality were never closed to my son and his wife after they had seen with the eye of faith their darling enter the Heavenly fold—and a sure hope of immortality is a mercy. Meanwhile to the Wolcotts and Lees that angel's mission was a solemn warning against vanity, indolence and worldliness, as well as against the waste of God's good gift of life and strength to serve Him. And surely such a warning is a mercy!

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE foregone pages afford a sufficient insight into the spirit and aspirations which ruled my son's wife during the early years of her married life. During them Bona had experienced what every married woman must, however happy her lot. Her husband had out-lived the first enthusiasm of his love, when every event was a sweet surprise, every look and word a caress. Nevertheless they remained lovers—and always have—and the life they lived together had been sweet and dear, and they did not fear the life to come. It was beautiful to note the growth of their love and confidence, and how everything from the least joy to the keenest sorrow served to bind them closer together, and to strengthen and deepen their dependence on one another. This dependence, however, did not in any way interfere with their individual freedom of thought and action. On the contrary, it seemed to blossom out of their mutual faith and love, and thus

while they each led a life apart it was always a life together.

At the end of five years Bona was no longer the care-free girl, whose advent I so gladly welcomed when my son brought her as a bride to Greenville. She had lost something of the fresh beauty of early youth, but that which is better and more lasting had come in its place, I mean the beauty reflected from a soul at peace.

During that half decade she had twice entered on the responsibilities of motherhood: and as you know, once she had passed through the valley of the shadow of death.

Meanwhile amid all her varied experiences she kept on spinning the web of life—as we all must, whether we are patient or rebellious—and in Bona's case the flax on her distaff was cheerful trust and hopeful courage. Her happiness was never dependent on external circumstances, but on internal conditions. When trial came she strove to let it fill out and complete her life, to strengthen her weakness, and to enlarge her capacity to live in the joy of hope, not only with quietude and rest, but with energy and strength for all usefulness, and so for all happiness. Yes truly in

Bona's joy there was no worldliness, and in her sorrow no bitterness. Although little Roy's death left a life-long aching vacancy in her heart her resignation was perfect, and so was her peace. She "put into her resignation, the same earnestness, the same heartiness, that she put into obedience in outward action." And there is such a difference between the resignation which is mere passive submission and the resignation that can smile amid trials, knowing their very severity is ordered by Him who "doth not willingly afflict": who pitieth His sorrowing children like as a father pitieth.

I must not omit the fact that in addition to home cares my son's wife has never failed to respond to the ceaseless demands made on her time, strength and sympathy by the people of her husband's parish. Among all classes she won love. She did them all good; she gave of her best to all; and she never thought of calling this service by any high-sounding title, such as charity or piety. As her sympathy went forth to others, it attracted others to her; yes, her greatest power consisted in her quick sympathy, and it was combined with the charm

of individuality. That charm did not merely appear in the ordinary way by appealing to the eye or ear. "It was of a different kind; it flowed from the inner depth and genuineness of her sympathetic feeling." Sympathy, I repeat, was the strongest element in her nature. Because of the sweet, unpretentious simplicity, trust, and ready sympathy, of Bona's daily life, Dora Wolcott came to regard it as the unspoken but truest answer to her long-ago question as to how one could be "in the world and not of it." And yet, there have been days and days in Bona's life that would have left many a woman disheartened, dissatisfied and disappointed. Often I have asked myself why she was not impatient, and always the reply has been the same, because she accepts life as God's gift, and recognizes in all its homely details His love, and the opportunity for serving Him by serving His creatures. You know our Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto Me."

I am not unmindful that Bona has by nature a happy temperament, but more than that is required to meet life with a

calm, cheerful trust, whatever comes. Only the grace of God can help a woman to do this. And as Dora Wolcott often says, "Bona has that grace in her heart, so no wonder it lives out in her daily life." She has, too, the gift and the grace of giving a smile in answer to a sigh.

"Is it because life is like a picture to you?" Dora once asked. And Bona replied: "Yes, dear, if you use the word as an analogy, life is like a picture, and we are the artists who can fill in and adjust the lights and shadows on which its beauty depends." And softly she added, "And always, whether the shadows be light or dark, life is God's gift, and thus it must be good."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MORE than a year ago I began to tell this story of my son's wife—Bona. It has proved a pleasant task. Memory has led into rich and full harvest fields. At every turn I have found the ripened grain of her sweet influence. "Everywhere her feet have touched the meadows and left the daisies rosy"; everywhere flowers up-spring along the way by which she has stepped heavenward. Yes, "the path of a good woman," like Bona, "is indeed, as Ruskin says, 'strewn with flowers; and they rise behind her steps and not before them.'" You know the flowers I mean—the dear human flowers "that will bless you for having blessed them, and will love you for having loved them—flowers that have eyes like yours, and thoughts like yours, and lives like yours."

Will you, as my son's wife did, "go with healing and comfort to these feeble flowerets? Will you strive to up-lift and set them in order in their fragrant beds and fence

them in from the fierce wind of this evil world?"

This is the blessed service Bona has rendered, and it has been a service full of spiritual growth and aspirations for the right, the pure, and the true, and strong, in all sweet womanly thoughts, and loyal deeds of love. Surely it suggests an example worthy to be imitated by all young girls and women, especially by Bona's daughter—the maiden for whom I have gathered this sheaf of precious memories, and to whom I propose to give it to-morrow as a wedding gift. Hence there is no time for me to lengthen these pages. Well! enough has been told regarding the early years of my son and his wife's married life, and of the friends I have mentioned. And yet their lives have been full. My granddaughter knows the story of the latter years, and, I repeat, it is sufficient to record with Edward and Bona the Wolcotts' and the Lees' all is happy and prosperous. The good hand of God is visible among them. He has made "the rough places smooth and the crooked places straight." And you know why. You know how they learned the secret of peace which is only found

when men and women yield self-will and self-pleasing to do according to the good pleasure of God's will; you know how such men and women follow the leadings of Providence calmly and trustfully, because they believe that there is "no chance in the world." No one need seek after his or her way in life. It will be revealed if they have eyes to see and ears to hear in the every-day events of ordinary existence. God is in them; God speaks through them, and the only answer He requires is prompt and obedient acceptance of the service He ordains.

Yes, all is well with the trio of husbands and wives among whom my son's wife has filled a blessed place all these years. Meanwhile, now in life's meridian, as in the days of her youth, Bona sings a song set to the tune of hope and love. I heard her dear voice and I saw her sweet face an hour ago as she was coming up the garden walk—coming home, happy after rendering some tender service for Christ's sake. She approached swiftly in the clear warm light of the ending day, and she was as fair a picture of womanly loveliness as ever she had been in the glad fresh beauty of life's morning.

Her hair—where there are silver threads now—caught a gleam of the level rays of the setting sun, her cheeks were tinted with the rosy glow, her eyes beamed brightly, for she looked toward the study window, where Edward, her middle-aged husband, stood

As she met his gaze she answered it with a tender smile of wifely confidence and trust, and again her lips parted as she sang:

"Yea, the night knows my song,
And she has told it to the stars in heaven—
The little stars to whom it seemed so sweet—
That every evening they return and listen
To hear my song from me."

"What song?" Edward asked, as he looked down on his wife's up-lifted face.

Softly Bona answered: "The song of the goodness and mercy that has followed me all the days of my life; the song of the Lord, my Light and my Salvation, my Strength and my Shield, the Lord in whom my heart greatly rejoiceth as with my song I praise Him."

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